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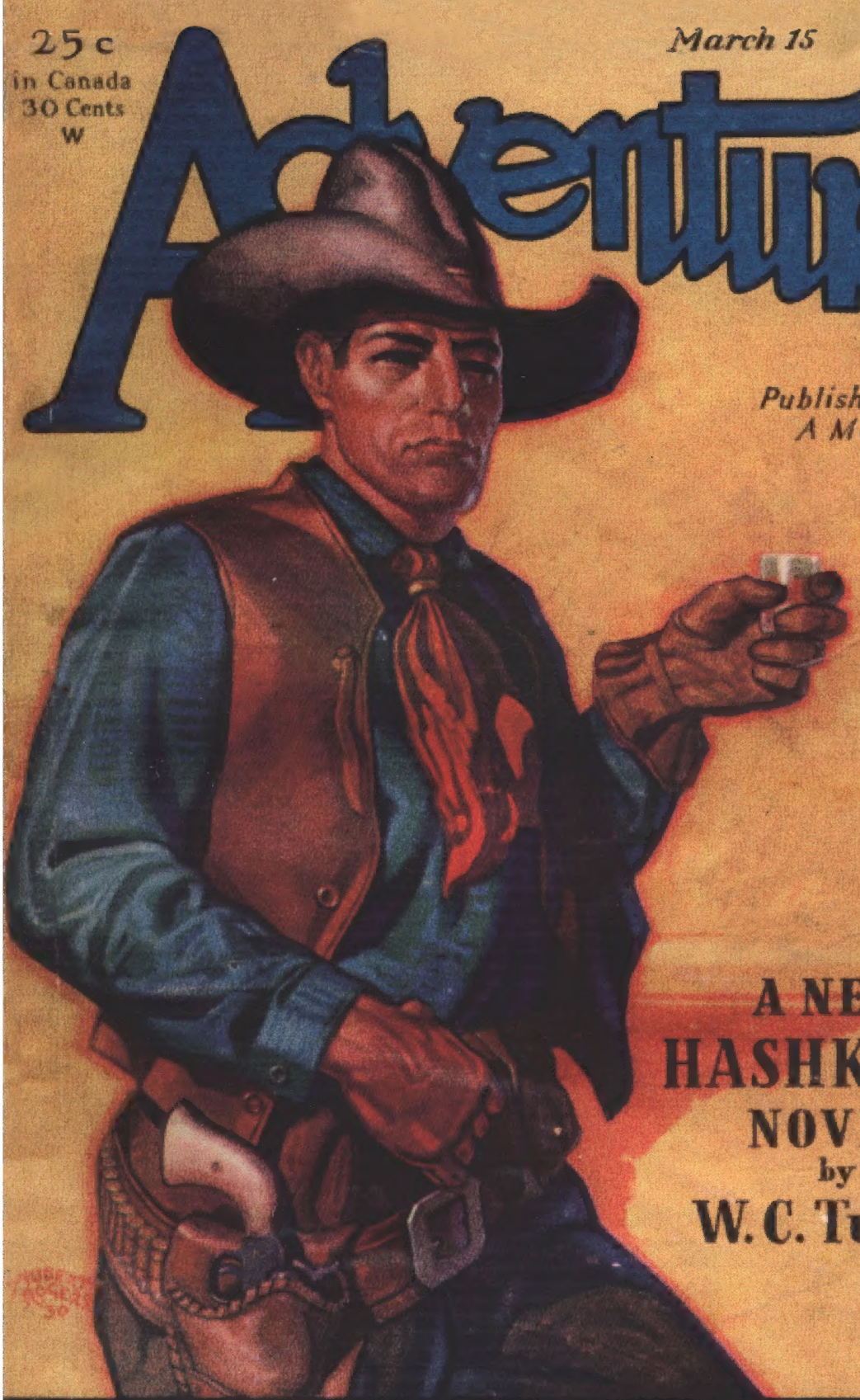

A NEW HASHKNIFE NOVEL by W. C. Tuttle

HAROLD LAMB · GEORGES SURDEZ · STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS
ANDREW A. CAFFREY · BASIL CAREY · L. PATRICK GREENE

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

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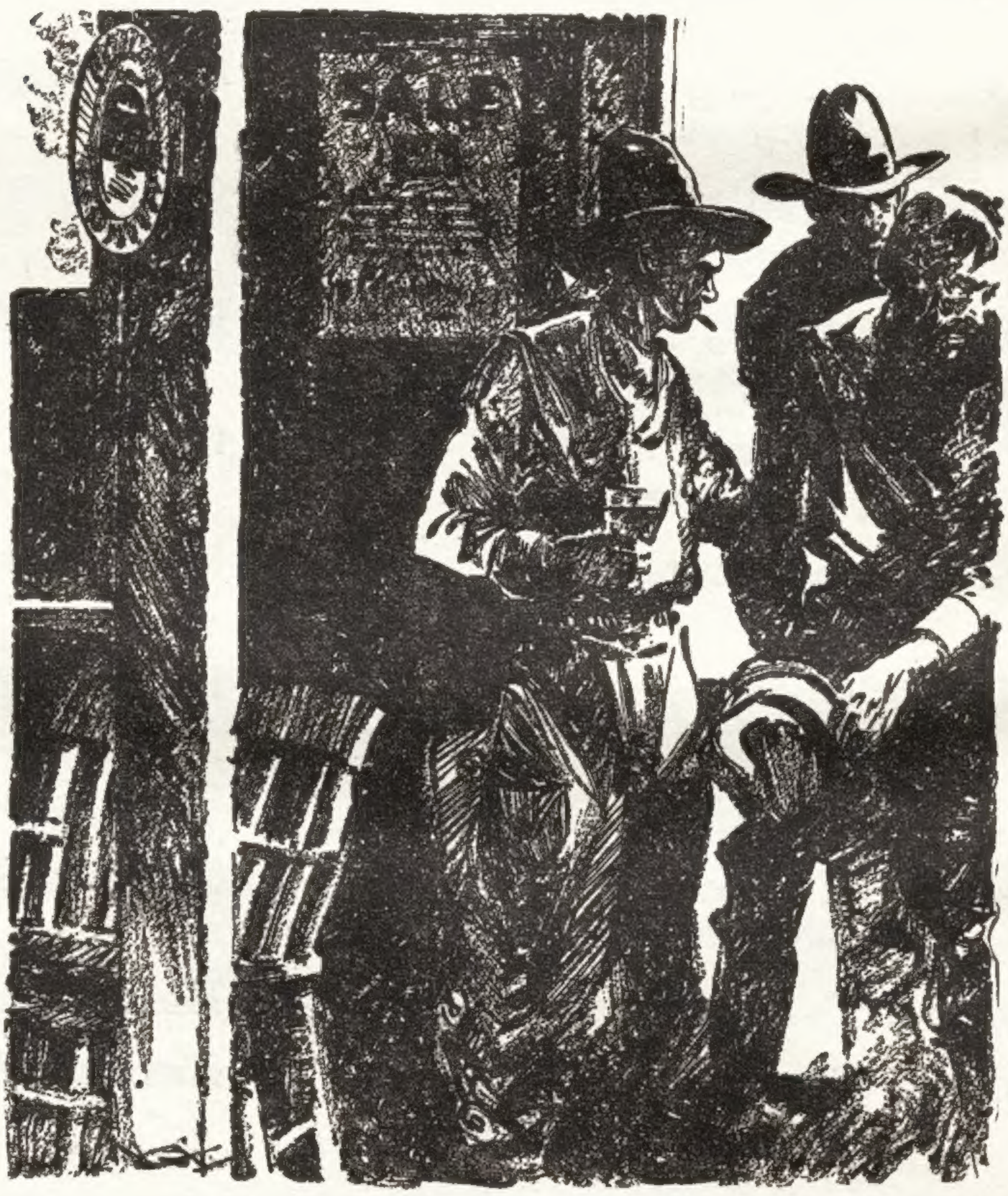
Beginning

A New Mystery Novel with Hashknife and Sleepy



PROLOGUE

IT SEEMED as though the centuries had rolled back at this one little spot—the centuries which separated the cave man from civilization. Here was a turgid, muddy stream, slogging in against a bank of willows and tule growth, flecked with yellow sunshine through the overhanging trees.

On a sloping muddy bank were two men, as naked as the day they were born, plastered with mud, their faces bloody, lips drawn back in the snarl of battle. They were little above the average in size, and yet they looked huge in that broken, yellow sunlight.

They were evenly matched. Both had black hair, the same breadth of shoulder and length of limb. They fought ankle deep in the slippery mud, unable to secure a firm foothold, which probably accounted for the lack of power in their blows. There was no clinching—just slug, slug, slug—wheezing lungs, the slap of bare feet in the mud.

The end came suddenly. A blow missed, a forward lunge. Straight to the point of a muddy chin flashed a muddy fist—a short, smashing uppercut. The victor staggered to the top of the bank, breathing in whistling gasps. He did not pause to clean away the muck of battle. From among the weeds he picked up a black shirt, worn overalls, ragged underclothes, a battered sombrero and a pair of old boots. He looked back at his fallen adversary for several moments, shook his head and plunged into the underbrush.

By W. C. TUTTLE

The SCAR *of* FATE

It seemed a long time before the other man regained consciousness. He rolled over on his back, staring blankly at the trees, but finally got slowly to his feet. He looked around, as though expecting to see the other man, shook his head violently to clear it, and then went down to the water where he washed away the blood and dirt.

His lower lip was badly lacerated and there was a cut across his cheek, but otherwise he did not seem to be marked.

He walked slowly up the bank to the patch of weeds, his eyes searching them closely. Suddenly he reached down and picked up a queer looking pair of trousers. They were as striped as the coat of a zebra. He dropped them and picked up the jacket, also striped; the unmistakable uniform of a penitentiary.

A noise caused him to jerk suddenly around, and the next moment he went down in a clawing heap, while from the trees came the crack of rifles, followed by a shrill yell—

"We've got him!"

A few moments later four men with ready rifles came from the brush, but the naked, huddled figure did not move. They turned him over and grinned callously. A soft nosed bullet had slashed across his face, leaving it a bloody smear. There was not much face left. Blood dripped from a bullet hole in his right shoulder, and another had bored its way through the calf of his left leg. He was unconscious.

The prison guards stood around him.

"Better put them rags on him," suggested one of them. "That was like Joe Cross—stoppin' to take a bath with a dozen men an' a pair of bloodhounds on his trail."

"Looks like his finish this time," said another.

"Finish, hell! You can't kill a guy like him."

"Mebbe not; but he'll never look like anybody again. That bullet plumb ruined his face, that's a cinch."

"You might say Joe Cross is a changed man," one of them said, laughing. "One of you go an' get some sort of a rig. Make it in a hurry, 'cause this con is liable to die before we get him to town."

But he did not die. They turned him over to the hospital department, where he lingered for weeks, finally to overcome the wounds. But the shock had been too much. He came out of the hospital, white of hair, with no memory of who he was or what he had done; not insane in any way, simply without any memory of the past.

He did not even remember the warden. They told him who he was and why he was in the prison. He accepted it meekly—a meek old man, who had been one of the dangerous inmates of the Nevada prison.

"He took the bullet cure," said the warden, who was not unkindly. "Perhaps it is just as well—maybe better. Who knows?"

And this happened about fifteen years ago. The records merely show that Joe Cross escaped, was shot down by a posse, recovered his health and resumed his place in the prison.

CHAPTER I

THE KING OF PIMA VALLEY

OLD ANGUS McLEOD wanted to die fighting, but fate willed otherwise, and Suey Ong, his ancient Chinese cook, found him dead in bed one morning, a half smile on his grim lips. And this was the peaceful passing of an old cattle range warrior, whose tongue was as bitter as his shooting was straight.

The folks of Pima Valley said that Angus McLeod loved no one—but they were wrong. He loved Suey Ong and Red Brant. This was discovered when Old Angus' will was read in Gila Springs—an unexpected will—in which Red Brant was given the Bar M ranch and everything thereon, providing also that Red Brant retain Suey Ong as ranch cook for the rest of Suey Ong's life, or as long as the Chinese might care to remain.

Buck Pearson heard this will, and nearly exploded with wrath. Buck owned the rest of Pima Valley, and for several years he had fought Old Angus, trying to buy him out or run him out. Angus owned two thousand acres in the center of the valley, owned the best water supply and the best grazing land. Pearson wanted it badly, but Angus would consider no offer. He hated Buck Pearson.

Harold—Buck—Pearson made his money in mines—one mine, to be exact. When he sold out he had enough money almost to buy out the whole of Pima Valley—almost. He wanted it all. He wanted to be the king of Pima Valley.

Buck had money enough to buy several places the size of the Bar M and not miss the money; but Angus McLeod didn't want money. When Buck heard that Angus was dead, knowing that Angus had no relatives, he thought the Bar M was as good as his; but there was that miserable will, all properly drawn up in Angus' well known hand.

"Red Brant!" snorted Buck. "My Gawd, why didn't he give it to somebody else? That cold eyed bob cat!"

"I reckon that's one of the reasons Angus done gave it to Red," remarked Mica Miller, the lantern jawed, grizzled sheriff. "He wanted somebody capable of takin' care of the Bar M."

"What the hell does that jigger know about cows?" queried Speck Smalley, the deputy. "I ain't never seen no cow-puncher yet that knowed beans about raisin' cows."

"Oklahomy knows cows," said the sheriff.

"He didn't inherit Oklahomy."

"No-o-o, but I'll betcha forty dollars Oklahomy stays. Knows cows, he does, an' he's the best Winchester shot in the valley."

Buck Pearson growled audibly and hitched up his belt. Buck was past forty, heavily built, but very active. There was a touch of gray about his dark hair and stubby mustache. He had blocky features and a deep lined face. His eyes were gray. Buck was not a jovial person, he was harsh in his dealings, and had but little sense of humor.

He owned the Pima Saloon & Gambling House, but took no active part in running it. That was left to Faro Fleming, a pale faced, hard eyed gambler, who managed the place with a good profit for Buck.

"Have you seen Faro's sister?" asked Speck.

"No," growled Buck.

"You've missed somethin'."

"What do you mean?"

"Man, she's a sight for sore eyes. Pretty? Well, I'd tell a man she is. Ain't over thirty an' won't weigh more 'n a hundred an' fifteen. Faro introduced me to her when she got off'n the stage, an' I've been walkin' slaunchways ever since. Name's Fanny De Lacey—a widder."

"Uh-huh. Faro told me she was comin'. Her husband was a doctor."

Buck turned away and strolled up the the street to the Gila Hotel. Faro Fleming and his sister were coming out and they stopped to meet him.

Fanny De Lacey was pretty—and knew it. Her face was as clean cut as a cameo, the patrician nose a trifle tilted. But there was a certain hardness about her carmine lips, a calculating stare in her big gray eyes. There was nothing of the clinging vine type about her. She had jolted over some of the rough spots of life—the cheap chorus and small time shows.

Doctor Frank De Lacey hired her for his medicine show and married her. An injury caused them to settle down in an Eastern village, where a few years later the doctor died. She had kept up a correspondence with Faro, who had asked her to join him.

Buck Pearson took her tiny gloved hand in his—and was sold for life. He muttered some sort of acknowledgment of the introduction, which caused Faro Fleming to wrinkle his usually frozen face into a smile. He had made a study of human nature, and he could read Buck Pearson easily. It was as Faro had hoped it would be.

"So you are the great Buck Pearson," said Fanny, actually a little awed, her gray eyes wide.

"Aw, not so great," grunted Buck.

"Faro has been telling me quite a lot about you, and he says you are really a cattle king. It must be wonderful to—well, to have people say things like that; to own a whole valley and so many cows."

Buck grinned.

"I think Faro has been fillin' you up with a lot of lies."

"Oh, no, he hasn't."

"Well," faltered Buck uneasily, "I dunno."

Fanny's laugh thrilled Buck to the core. She took him by the sleeve with easy familiarity as she said:

"You see, he doesn't dare lie to me, because I expect to be here long enough to find out things for myself, Mr. Cattle King. We are going to rent a little place, where I can keep house for my brother. Oh, I am going to be so useful to him."

"That's great," said Buck slowly.

She smiled coyly.

"And you will come up to see us?"

"Well, I'd sure like to, Mrs. De Lacey."

"Won't you please call me Fanny? Every one does."

Buck took a deep breath.

"Yeah, I like to call folks by their names. Mine's Buck."

"That's fine. Faro has written so much about you that I have always called you Buck—to myself, of course," she added quickly, coloring a little.

SHE TURNED to look at a rider on a beautiful pinto horse, coming into the main street at breakneck speed. Buck swore softly as horse and rider came to a slashing stop at the edge of the wooden sidewalk. In the language of the range, the cowboy "spiked his horse's tail" and skidded to a stop.

The animal snorted wildly. There was a jingle of spurs and chains as the rider made a quick dismount, dropping his reins to the ground. He was picturesque in his outfit of flaring chaps of black and white leather, with huge silver *conchas*, fancy stitched boots, blue silk shirt, surmounted by a black silk muffler. His hat was a pearl colored Stetson with a seven inch brim, and around his narrow waist was a wide, hand stamped cartridge belt, supporting a fancy holster from which protruded the carved bone handle of a Colt revolver.

At sight of the woman he swept off his sombrero, disclosing a head of hair, naturally wavy, shining like burnished copper in the sunlight. His face was thin, but well shaped and heavily freckled. He had a wide mouth full of good teeth, and a pair of steely blue eyes which seemed to look inquiringly at Fanny De Lacey.

Faro Fleming looked away from him and spoke to Buck, as the rider stepped up on the sidewalk, turned his back to them and walked down the sidewalk to a store. Fanny watched him until he disappeared, and turned to Buck Pearson.

"Who is that?" she asked abruptly.

"That?" Buck's smile was more of a sneer. "Oh, he's just a cowpuncher named Red Brant."

"Tough kid," added Faro.

Fanny laughed shortly.

"Looks as though he might *do* things."

"Somebody will probably break his fool neck one of these days," growled Faro.

"Yeah," grunted Buck, and Fanny laughed.

"I would deduce from that that you two are not exactly friends of the said Red Brant," she said solemnly. "What does he do—steal cattle or break faro banks?"

"We haven't got him on either charge." Buck grinned.

While they were talking a nondescript outfit came drifting into town; a desert derelict and his ancient burro, shuffling along to the hitch-rack near the Pima Saloon. The prospector was of indeterminate age, ragged, dirty, unkempt, his face grotesque from a ragged scar. He was slightly stooped, slow of motion as he tied the burro.

His outfit was meager, hardly more than a pair of dirty bankets, a kettle, frying pan, gold pan and pick and shovel. Hanging to the side of the little pack was a battered old canteen.

"But for the grace of God, that might be either of you," said Fanny seriously.

Buck laughed shortly as he watched the plodding figure heading for the doorway of the big saloon.

"If I hadn't made my strike," he said. "Did you make your money in mines, Buck?" she asked.

"In one mine—the Lucky Cross. Cleaned up a quarter of a million on it."

"My, that's a lot of money! . . . Well, if you gentlemen will excuse me, I'll go back to my room."

Buck and Faro crossed the street and entered the saloon. The derelict was at the bar, arguing with the bartender, who was righteously angry.

"I tell you, no!" he snorted. "If you want whisky, shell out the *dinero*. We ain't passin' out liquor to ever' barfly that comes draggin' in."

The man shook his head wearily and leaned heavily against the bar.

"Mister, I ain't got a red cent," he confessed. "I run plumb out o' grub back there in the hills, too. Ain't et since last night."

"That don't interest me none," said the bartender callously. "We do a cash business around here, so you better pull out."

The man turned wearily and looked around. Buck Pearson and Faro had stopped near the middle of the room, and

the stranger's eyes lighted at sight of them. With one gnarled hand he reached into a pocket of his ragged overalls and drew out a piece of rock about the size of a large walnut.

"I ain't askin' for much," he said in a whining voice. "It don't take much to grubstake old Mojave. An' if I can find the spot where this float started from, she's worth a cold million. Like to see a hunk o' jewelry, gents?"

He shuffled up to Buck and held out the rock. The big cattleman looked narrowly at the ore in the prospector's hand, and he smiled sourly.

"No use," he said shortly.

"Don'tcha know gold ore, mister?"

"Git out," growled Buck, motioning toward the door. "You desert rats steal a piece of highgrade and use it to pry loose a grubstake. You never found that piece of ore, you lousy old liar."

The derelict sighed as he pocketed his rock.

"I'm hungry," he said. "Ain't even got two-bits."

"Well, get to hell out of here then," replied Buck. "Go out an' get a job."

"An' that burro ain't et neither. If I jist had ten dollars for grub, I'd split everythin' I find with you. I'm honest. Jist havin' a run o' hard luck, thasall."

"Yeah, I know your type of hard luck. The desert is full of damned old gopher hole diggers like you. Take your burro an' keep movin'."

For a moment the spirit of the derelict flared.

"There ain't no law that says I've got to pull out. Who are you to make me keep movin'?"

THERE came a chuckling laugh from the doorway, and they turned to see Red Brant lounging carelessly in the open portal.

"Old-timer," he said, grinning, "I've been wonderin' that, too. Some folks get a couple extra dollars an' they immediate an' soon become bossy. Go back there an' lean against the bar, will you? Drinks are two-bits apiece. Ask the bartender to serve you a couple. Yeah, I'm stakin' you to both of 'em, an' here's the money."

He tossed a fifty cent piece so accurately that it landed flat on the bar and skidded down to the derelict's elbow.

"If you don't mind," said the man, "I'll have one drink an' spend the rest for somethin' to eat."

"You take two drinks," ordered Red. "I'll feed you—plenty."

Red turned and looked at Buck and Faro coldly.

"You're a fine pair of citizens," he said. "Man dyin' from hunger an' thirst, an' all you do is order him to get out of the town. Cattle king an' a short-card gambler. Well, I suppose you're both runnin' to form."

Buck Pearson flushed angrily as he came toward Red.

"Listen to me, Brant," he said coldly. "I'm tired of your tongue, an' you've gone too damned far with your talk. Mind your own business or I'll make this valley too hot to hold you."

"Yeah?" Red drawled lazily. "It seems to me that this old prospector is as much my business as yours, Pearson—an' I'm entitled to my own opinion of you. Might as well say it as to think it."

Buck paused, his face purple with wrath. But Buck, even in anger, was no fool. This reckless, red headed youngster was not afraid of anything, and his steely blue eyes, even with their glint of humor, spoke a warning to Buck.

"Damn red headed rattler—" Buck spoke his thoughts aloud.

"Much obliged for the drinks, pardner," said the derelict.

"Don't mention it," said Red slowly, keeping an eye on Buck. "Slide past me an' head up the street to that chink restaurant; I'll be with you right away."

Wonderingly the man passed Red and walked on.

"Anythin' else you'd like to say, Buck?" asked Red calmly.

Buck looked venemously at Red, turned and walked back to the bar. With

a wide, white toothed grin Red Brant slipped outside and went up toward the restaurant, whistling unmusically between his teeth. The derelict was waiting, and they sat down together.

"I'm shore grateful to you," said the older man. "But I hope I ain't the cause of you havin' trouble with them other men."

Red Brant laughed softly.

"Shucks, I don't need no cause to have a quarrel with Buck Pearson."

"Does he own the town?"

"Well, I wouldn't go that far. You see, Buck ain't as big as he thinks he is. I don't reckon he owns anythin' right here in town, except that saloon an' gamblin' house, half interest in the stage line, feed store, hotel, an' probl'y some interest in the biggest merchandise store. No, I don't reckon he owns the post office. An' along with that he owns almost all of this here valley—almost."

They gave their order to a Chinese waiter, and Red ordered a double meal for the prospector.

"He must have lots of money," said the prospector.

"Yeah, I reckon he did have. He sold a big gold mine."

"Yeah?" The prospector's eyes sparkled with interest. "Did he find it?"

"Uh-huh. Called it the Lucky Cross. Over in Nevada, I understand. Sold it for a quarter of a million."

"There's money in prospectin'."

"Yeah, you look it."

"I ain't had no luck. Look at this."

The derelict took out the piece of ore and handed it across to Red.

"That there's jewelry rock, young feller. Mebbe run ten thousand to the ton."

"Yeah-a-ah? Where'd you find it?"

The man pocketed the ore, and squinted at Red for several moments.

"I dunno," he replied shortly.

"You dunno, eh? Scared to tell me?"

"No, I jist don't remember."

"You're goin' to be a lot of use to yourself as a prospector," sighed Red. "Find it an' forget it, eh?"

"It seems like I do."

"Well, quit prospectin' awhile an' dig into them ham an' eggs."

"I'm shore grateful to you, young man. If I ever do find it—"

"Jist remember where you found it," finished Red.

CHAPTER II

LORNA PEARSON

WILLIAM WILLIS, stage driver extraordinary, was undeniably drunk. But that was merely a usual condition with William, who swore he had had delirium tremens so often that he enjoyed it. In fact, it was his one and only relaxation—a sort of vacation.

William was tall, thin, looked like a dyspeptic, but must have had a cast iron stomach. He had one eye slightly off-center, a crooked nose, long neck and a set expression about his wide mouth. Just now William was standing against a front wheel of his stage, trying to focus his eyes on the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

She had arrived on the train the night before, but this was William's first sight of her—rather blurred, to be sure.

"Yes'm," he said cordially. "This is the stage that goes to Gila Springs. Right now you're standin' halfway up the main street of Pima City, talkin' with Willyum Willis, E-squire, prob'ly the greatest stage driver on earth an' all places east."

"I wish to go to Gila Springs," the girl said, rather amused at William.

"Wishin'," said William, "never got nobody no place. If it had I'd be—oh, a king probab'ly. I've allus wished to be a king."

"A laudable ambition." The girl smiled.

"Whatcha say, ma'am?"

"I said it was worth wishing for."

"Now ain't that true, ma'am. I mean a real crown wearin' king. But I suppose even that job has its drawbacks. Buck Pearson wants to be a king. Fact, he does. Cattle king. Well, I reckon we

better go. You can git up on the seat an' ride with me, if you ain't timid."

"Is there anything to be timid about?" she asked.

"Nope. Some folks says I drive reckless—scare 'em stiff. But I says to 'em what's the difference whether you git smashed up inside the stage or meet your Maker in midair, as you might say? . . . Can you git up?"

The girl climbed gracefully to the high seat, and William looked her over, squint eyed.

"You're all right," he said admiringly, as he climbed up beside her and picked up the lines. "Now you jist hang on tight, an' you'll git your wish."

The team lurched into a gallop, and the stage rumbled out of Pima City in a cloud of dust. There was no chance for conversation for the first few miles, until they started on the upgrade toward the top of a flat mesa. Buck produced a bottle and helped himself to a big drink, with no apology. The girl watched him curiously.

"You spoke about a Buck Pearson," she reminded him.

He nodded absently, watching the road ahead.

"Is his name Harold?"

"Huh? Harold? Name's Buck."

"But Buck must be merely a nickname. Isn't his brand HP?"

"Yea-a-ah, that's—well, I dunno. Mebbe his right name's Harold."

"How old a man is he?"

"Mebbe a little over forty."

"He signs his name H. J. Pearson."

William turned his head and looked at her.

"He ain't been writin' to you, has he, ma'am?"

"No, he hasn't."

"Uh-huh. I asked because Buck's stuck on the sister of Faro Flemin'."

"Oh, is that so?"

"I'd tell you it's so. Crazy as a loon. I seen him a-brushin' of his teeth, an' he's shaved his face every day. Oh, she's pretty." William looked fixedly at the girl. "Almost as pretty as you are—Git back on that grade!" he yelled at the team. "Gosh, I almost dropped a wheel off the aidge.

"I ain't married," he confided after a few moments, "an' women affect me queer. Ord'narily I never git a wheel off the grade. Too good a driver for that. Been drivin' this road for five year an' I've only smashed up two stages. Pretty good, eh?"

"I imagine it is."

"It shore is."

William helped himself to another drink and put away the bottle.

"Heart medicine," he told her. "Bengal taggar blood."

"Really?"

"Ab-slutely, ma'am."

"What sort of a man is Buck Pearson?"

"Sort?"

"Is he well liked?"

William shut an eye and looked at her.

"You ain't from some matreemonial agency, are you, ma'am?"

The girl laughed and shook her head.

"Plenty interested, if you ain't."

"I have a reason for asking about him."

"Oh, yeah. Well, you see, Buck pays me a salary an' gives me credit at both ends of the line; so I've got plenty reasons for not tellin' anythin' about him."

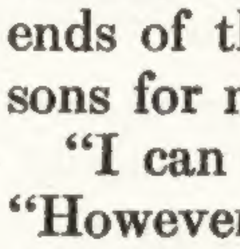
"I can appreciate that," said the girl. "However, it doesn't matter as I shall get the information first hand."

William nodded an' took another drink.

"Heart bothering you again?" asked the girl.

"Troubles me quite a lot," grunted William. "Now you hang on to your hat an' I'll show you what makes 'em call me the greatest stage driver in the world."

And William uncoiled his long whip, straightened up and sent it singing and popping over the rumps of the leaders.



RED BRANT and Oklahoma had been to Gila Springs and were on their way back to the Bar M, which was located about two miles south of Gila Springs, and just off the road to Pima City. As

far as any one knew Oklahoma had no other name—just "Oklahomy" an old time cow waddy. He had worked for Angus McLeod for years, having come from Oklahoma Territory. Perhaps he had reasons of his own for losing his right name, and no one questioned him.

They were just turning off the main road when the stage came in sight over the mesa rim beyond, where the sharp curves pitch down to the valley level again. Red Brant stopped his horse sharply.

"Look at that blamed fool of a William runnin' his team again," he said. "Some day he'll go in the ditch an' never come out."

"Drunk as usual," said Oklahoma. "Runnin' a team down there thataway. Ort to be a law—"

"My God, he never made that last turn!" exclaimed Red. "He's off the grade!"

They whirled their horses and raced along the road, their faces anxious. Down around a brushy turn, up a sharp slope to the next sharp turn, jerking their horses to a stop and dismounting quickly. Dust was still rising from the side of the grade, where the heavy stage had torn off the shoulder.

It was not over fifteen feet down in the narrow cañon to the overturned vehicle. Two horses were down, tangled in the brush, and their first concern was to cut them loose. Beyond a number of cuts and bruises, the animals did not seem badly hurt; merely dazed and frightened.

They found William Willis on his back near the stage, unconscious. They shifted him to a more comfortable position.

"I'll pack the word back to town," offered Oklahoma. "You stay here."

Red nodded and watched Oklahoma climb to the grade and go galloping back toward Gila Springs. Red wanted to wash some of the blood from the driver's face, but there was no water nearer than the ranch. A low moan attracted his attention and he whirled quickly.

Red blinked foolishly. There was a girl behind a manzanita, trying to get to her feet. In three strides Red was over to her, and she fainted in his arms. Red looked wildly around, wondering what to do. He was not in the habit of holding young ladies in his arms, and this one, in spite of the blood and dust on her face, was disconcertingly pretty.

Red swore softly. He didn't want to hold her, but he didn't want to put her down. He looked at the smear of blood across her cheek, gritted his teeth and carried her up the slope to his horse. His one idea was to get her where there was water.

The pinto snorted fearfully and tried to get both hind feet off the grade, but Red Brant swung the girl up to the saddle, caught the stirrup and mounted quickly, lifting the girl in his arms. The pinto whirled nervously, but Red swung him down the grade recklessly.

They whirled off the main road and galloped down to the ranch-house of the Bar M. Suey Ong and the old derelict known as Mojave, were on the wide porch, apparently rooted to the spot, as Red slid off the pinto and came up the steps carrying the girl.

"Heat some water, Suey Ong," he panted, and carried her into the big main room, where he placed her on a blanket covered cot.

The old Chinese hurried to the kitchen, while Mojave followed Red.

"Stage went off the grade," said Red. "Oklahomy went back to town after help."

"Is she hurt much?"

As if in anwer to the question the girl opened her eyes. For several moments she stared at Red, then tried to sit up.

"You better take it easy," advised Red. "Mojave, bring me a dipper of cold water, will you?"

The cold water seemed to revive her, and a moment later Suey Ong came in with a basin of warm water. Red bathed her face awkwardly, and was relieved to discover that the blood was all from a little cut on her cheek.

"Thank you very much," she said weakly. "I—I guess I wasn't hurt very

much after all. Did the stage go off the road?"

"Yes'm, it shore did." Red smiled. "Piled up complete."

"The driver—was he hurt?"

"Drunk, wasn't he?" asked Red.

"He was drinking."

"I know. They ort to take him out an' boot him off the range. Runnin' a stage, drunk! It's a wonder you wasn't killed. Are you shore there ain't no bones broken?"

"No; I don't believe so."

"That's fine."

"Where am I?"

"Bar M ranch, ma'am. It's only about a mile over to where you went into the ditch. Now, you jist lay still here an' take it easy. I'm goin' back to the stage. Was you—you goin' to meet somebody in Gila Springs?"

"No; not exactly. No one knows me there."

"Uh-huh. You rest awhile, an' I'll be back. Mojave, you stay here with her an' if she wants anythin' you get it."

"*Esta buena.*" The old prospector nodded and sat down in a broken rocker to fill his pipe.

"What's your name?" he asked the girl.

"Lorna Pearson," she said.

"Lorna? That's a right pretty name. An' Pearson—ain't there a feller in Gila Springs named Pearson? It seems to me there is."

"I *sabe* him velly good," said Suey Ong from the kitchen doorway. "I no like. Long time he no like this place. Velly bad."

The girl turned her head and looked at the Chinese.

"Do you known him well?" she asked.

"Velly good. He make lo's money. Long time he like buy this lanch. No sell. I t'ink him velly clooked. Lo's money, not velly good man."

"He has lots of money?"

"Oh, velly much money. He own Gila Spling, own mos' all valley."

"Is he married?" the girl asked, after a moment.

"No, he not got woman now. Plitty soon, mebbe."

The girl sank back on her pillow, staring at the ceiling.

"So he has lots of money," she said softly. Then, "Do you know if his name in Harold J. Pearson?"

"His name Buck," said the Chinese, and went back to the kitchen.

IT WAS possibly a half hour before Red Brant came back. Men had come from Gila Springs and taken William Willis back with them, along with the stage team. Red was not needed, so he hurried back.

"Willis wasn't hurt much," said Red. "Can't hurt a drunk like him—although he's still unconscious. As soon as you feel like it, I'll take you to town."

"You are very kind," murmured the girl. "Do you know Mr. Pearson very well?"

Red looked keenly at her.

"Yeah, I know him pretty well."

"Aren't his initials H.J?"

"Yeah—" Red nodded. "Harold J. Pearson. Everybody calls him Buck."

"My name is Pearson—Lorna Pearson," she told him.

Red's eyes were quizzical, but he waited for her to continue.

"I have spent quite a lot of time search- for Harold Johnson Pearson," she said slowly. "I have a girl friend who works for one of the big packing houses in Chicago, and she told me of an H. J. Pearson who was a big cattleman out here."

"Yeah?" Red smiled lazily. "You ain't a female detective, are you, ma'am?"

Lorna Pearson smiled back at him.

"Why did you ask that question?"

"Well—" Red smiled—"you said you'd been lookin' for him a long time."

"Is there any reason why a detective might be looking for him?"

"No, I don't reckon there is, ma'am. You say your name's Pearson?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"Mine's Brant. Folks call me Red. I've got a hazy recollection of bein'

christened Bob or Robert. But a regular name don't stand any chance when you've got hair like mine."

"Your hair is beautiful, Mr. Brant. No—I really mean that."

"Shore—" Red nodded solemnly. "Beautiful like a red cow is beautiful."

Lorna laughed at him.

"You are not at all vain, Mr. Brant."

"You quit callin' me mister."

"Then you quit calling me ma'am."

"You hadn't ort to quarrel," said Mojave seriously.

Red laughed and turned toward the kitchen.

"Will you stay and eat supper with us—uh—Lorna?" he asked.

"I would be delighted, Red."

"Check! I'll take you to town after supper."

Suey Ong looked curiously at Red as he stopped in the mi'dle of the kitchen.

"Velly plitty," he said solemnly.

Red shoved his hands in his pockets and frowned thoughtfully.

"I reckon I'll massacree a chicken for supper, Ong."

"Too late," replied the Chinese.

"What do you mean?"

"I kill two jus' while ago. Feed li'l gi'l velly good, mebbe-so she stay."

"Yeah!" said Red. "You do have some damn bright ideas, Ong—but the part that makes 'em tick is always missin'."

CHAPTER III

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS—MISSING!

THEY dragged the smashed stage around behind the blacksmith shop in Gila Springs, and several of the men carried the unconscious driver down to the doctor's house. Oklahoma had come back to town with them, but now he was ready to return to the ranch. While they had been working to get the stage back to the grade, Buck Pearson and his foreman, Tex Thorne, had appeared on the scene, riding from Pima City.

Buck had been bitter in his denunciation of Willis, who smelled of bad whisky, and swore it was the last time Willis would ever drive that stage. None of them seemed aware that Willis had had a lady passenger.

"Load all O.K, I wonder?" queried the sheriff. "None of us thought to check it up."

"Why, I reckon it is," replied Pearson. "We can soon see."

"Here's the papers an' things that William had in his pocket," said the deputy. "They fell out an' I picked 'em up."

Buck sorted them quickly, climbed in over a crooked wheel and began digging into the load. Finally he dropped down, his face grave with deep concern, and examined the waybills again.

"Mica, you get up there an' take a look," he said to the sheriff.

"Somethin' missin', Buck?"

"It shore looks like it. Here's waybills coverin' a shipment of currency to the bank—an' the strong box ain't on that stage!"

"Ain't on it?"

"You see if you can find it—I can't."

Oklahoma helped them, and the four men made a search, unloading most of the stuff; but there was no strong box.

"Do you suppose it's—that we overlooked it?" asked the sheriff.

"It ain't that small," said Buck.

"I mean, it might have fallen off down there in the brush."

"That's possible, of course."

"Well, we better go look before it gits dark," said Oklahoma.

"All right. I'll get the boys to handle this stuff over to the stage station."

Pearson started away, but turned and looked at Oklahoma.

"You an' Red Brant saw the smash-up, didn't you?" he asked.

"We shore did."

"Didn't you say something about leavin' Red there, while you came to town?"

"Well?"

"Nothin', only we didn't see anythin' of him down there when we come up."

Oklahoma shut his lips tightly for several moments. Then—

"You ain't meanin' anythin' by that remark, are you, Buck?"

Buck laughed shortly.

"I merely wanted to get it straight. Well, I'll be back in a few minutes."

Oklahoma turned to the sheriff.

"I hope we find that box, Mica."

"Yea-a-ah, I shore hope we do. You told me you left Red at the wreck, but he wasn't there . . . I like Red Brant."

"I shore hope we find that box."

"You ain't got no idea where Red went, have you?"

"I ain't seen him since, Mica—an' I'm scared that box ain't there."

"So am I. We'd have found it if it was, Oklahomy."

"Yes, sir, I'm scared we won't find it. Ten thousand dollars is a lot of money. How much would that box weigh?"

"Mebbe twenty pounds. You carry it on a saddlehorn. The money itself wouldn't weigh much."

Buck came back shortly, and the three of them mounted their horses.

"Was that money all for the bank?" queried the sheriff.

"Yeah." Buck nodded grimly. "An' I'm the bank."

"You own that too, eh?" said Oklahoma.

"I have—for over a year. It looks like a losin' proposition."

"Did Willis know you had that much money comin'?" asked the sheriff.

"No. The box is locked in Pima City, an' he couldn't tell what was in it."

They rode back to the scene of the accident and made a search, but there was no strong box there.

"The thing to do," said Buck, as they mounted their horses, "is to go over an' find out where Red Brant went after Oklahoma left him—an' why he went away."

"I dunno," said the sheriff dubiously.

"Before you do anythin' like that, you better wait until Willis can talk sensible," advised Oklahoma. "There ain't no cinch bet that the strong box was ever loaded on that stage. An' I'd hate to have you accuse Red Brant of takin' it."

"What's your opinion, Mica?" asked Buck coldly.

"Produce evidence that Red got the strong box, an' I'll arrest him, Buck. But I'll be damned if my hide ain't worth too much to me to jist go over an' ask him what he done with it."

"Well, I'm not goin' to lose ten thousand dollars an' not make a yelp."

"Nobody asks you to; but you better wait an' see if you've lost it."

They rode up close to where the road forked to the Bar M.

"All right," agreed Buck. "But I'm takin' a long chance. If we went over right now an' questioned Red, we might do some good; but after Oklahoma gets a chance to tell him—"

Sock!

It sounded like striking a quarter of beef with a mallet when old Oklahoma flung himself sidewise in his saddle and smashed Buck Pearson square on the jaw with his gloved fist. Buck's hands went out in a clawing fashion, the horse lurched aside, and Buck went headlong off the side of the road on his shoulders.

Oklahoma's horse whirled nervously, but the old cowboy swung him back into the road. He and the sheriff looked squarely at each other.

"That don't help much," said the sheriff.

"Mebbe not; but he had it comin'."

"Uh-huh. Well, you go on home an' I'll take care of him."

The sheriff got down and helped Buck to sit up, while Oklahoma galloped on to the ranch-house.

Buck was badly dazed, but able to get back on his feet. He didn't seem to realize what had happened until he was back on his horse, when memory returned to him.

"Where'd he go?" demanded Buck.

"Who, Oklahomy? Oh, he went home—over to the Bar M."

They rode along in silence nearly to Gila Springs, but Buck's anger finally boiled over.

"No man can do that an' get away with it!" he said bitterly. "I've stood all I'll

ever stand from that Bar M outfit, an' I'll make them glad to get out of the valley, if it's the last thing I ever do. I'll send them dirty thieves to the penitentiary, an' I'll—"

"You hadn't ort to tell me that," interrupted Mica.

"Why not? I put you where you are. Hell, do you think you'd be sheriff if it wasn't for me?"

"Mebbe not."

"Mebbe not! There's an election this Fall, an' if you want to keep your job—"

"That's all right," Mica said slowly, "but don't tell me everythin' you might do to the Bar M outfit."

"I don't care who knows it. I own this valley, an' I'll do as I damn please. If that dirty old Scotchman had lived, I'd have run him out. Now I'm not goin' to even offer Red Brant a price. I'll make Pima Valley so hot he'll be glad to leave."

"Shore," said the sheriff thoughtfully. "But you're goin' at it all wrong, Buck. If you're goin' to be a king, yank down your crown, set on the seat of your pants, an' act like a king. You've got men to do what you want done. First thing you know, we'll have to offer a reward for Red Brant."

"Why offer a reward?"

"For killin' you. Don't be a fool, Buck. That kid is poison with a gun, an' you an' your gang don't scare him. Even old Oklahomy is as fast with a gun as any man you've got, an' he'll stick to Red as long as there's any Red. I ain't offerin' advice to a man like you, Buck, but if it was me, I'd let him alone."

"This valley ain't big enough for more than one outfit."

"All I hope is that the law don't git dragged into no trouble."

"The law can keep out of it damn easy."

OKLAHOMA was worried as he rode along to the Bar M ranch-house. Not worried over striking Buck Pearson — although that might be bad medicine in Pima Valley—but worried about Red Brant. He did not want to believe Red had stolen that money. He would fight any man who said he did. But the money was gone. Oklahoma was a loyal old cowboy, staunch as an oak, but he could not condone robbery.

The old puncher dismounted at the steps of the ranch-house, came slowly up to the doorway where Red leaned negligently, smoking a cigaret. From the kitchen came the savory odors of frying chicken, mingled with the scent of coffee. The two men looked keenly at each other.

"Red, did you take somethin' away from that wreck?" asked Oklahoma.

Red smiled softly as he nodded his head. Oklahoma started violently.

"You did? Oh, you danged red headed fool!"

Red inhaled slowly, a quizzical expression in his eyes.

"Fool—?"

"Worse'n that, Red. Buck Pearson is wild. He knows you done it, an' he shot off his face too much—so I pasted him one in the jaw an' knocked him off his horse. I dunno why you done it—damned if I do—'cause they'd suspect you shore. You see, it belonged to Buck."

"Belonged to Buck Pearson?"

"Shore. Hell, he owns the Gila Springs Bank, now."

It was Red's turn to be mystified. He dropped the cigaret and ground it under his foot.

"You ain't gone loco, have you, Oklahomy?" he asked.

"No, I ain't—an' he *does* own the bank."

Red turned his head and looked back into the room.

"Lorna, will you come here, please?" he asked. A moment later the girl stepped up beside him.

Oklahoma gasped, shifted his feet and remembered to take off his hat.

"Miss Pearson, I'd like to have you meet Oklahomy," said Red slowly.

Lorna held out her hand with a smile.

"How do you do?" she said.

Oklahoma looked at her curiously. He shook hands with her as though he were

surprised to discover that she really existed.

"She was in that wreck," said Red, "an' she is what I brought over here with me."

Oklahoma rubbed one ear violently as he tried to digest all this.

"She got throwed off behind a bush an' I didn't see her until you was gone," explained Red.

Oklahoma struggled inwardly, trying to think of something to say, but finally blurted—

"Then you didn't git that treasure box, Red?"

"What treasure box?"

"It's gone—the one on the stage. An' it held ten thousand dollars for the Gila Springs Bank."

"I never seen any box."

"They think you got it."

"Who are they?"

"Buck Pearson an' the sheriff."

"What is it all about?" asked Lorna curiously.

"Somebody stole ten thousand dollars from the stage, ma'am," explained Oklahoma. "They ship val'able packages in a iron box, an' it seems that there was ten thousand dollars in paper money in the box today—money goin' to the Gila Springs Bank—an' the box is missin'."

"And they think Mr. Brant stole it?"

"Yes'm, that seems to be the general impression."

"I'm kinda sorry about that," drawled Red. "Sorry I didn't know there was that much money on the stage."

"Chicken leddy," called Suey Ong. "Glub pile."

They filed in and sat down at the table, Lorna Pearson, Red Brant, Oklahoma and Mojave, while Suey Ong dished up a huge platter of fried chicken, cooked as only a Chinese of the old school can cook it.

It was Lorna's first meal on a ranch of any sort. No one served. The food was passed around and every one helped himself.

"Are you goin' to be with us long?" asked Oklahoma, his mouth full.

Lorna smiled.

"Not very long, I'm afraid. This is my first time away from the city."

"You ain't done no livin' then," declared Oklahoma. "Gosh, I can't git m' breath in a city."

"What city?" asked Red.

"Well, Yuma, to be exact."

"Hot down there," said Mojave.

"You been to Yuma?" asked Oklahoma.

"I dunno," replied Mojave. "I think I have, but I dunno."

"He ain't certain of anythin'," explained Oklahoma.

"You're wrong," said Mojave. "I'm certain this is good chicken."

"You're improvin'." Red laughed. "You stick around here an' you'll get your memory back."

"I'm goin' prospectin', t'morrow."

"You ain't goin' prospectin'," declared Red. "What's the use? You can't remember where you find anythin'."

Lorna studied old Mojave's crooked face as he wolfed his meal, and said—

"My father used to prospect."

"Yeah? Ever find anythin'?" asked Oklahoma.

"I don't think so."

"Most of 'em don't. Is your father still livin'?"

"I don't know."

"Pulled out, eh?"

Red kicked Oklahoma under the table, and Oklahoma dropped his knife.

"I suppose he did," said Lorna. "I don't believe I ever tasted such good chicken in my life. Suey Ong is a wonderful chef."

Suey Ong grinned delightedly and insisted on heaping up her plate again.

"'S a funny thing, you bein' named Pearson," said Oklahoma. "Buck Pearson was a prospector."

"Was he?"

"Shore was. He discovered the Lucky Cross mine in Nevada, sold out for more money than there is cows in Arizony, an' that's how come he's ownin' everythin' around here. You ain't no kin to Buck, are you, ma'am?"

"I don't know," said Lorna.

"I shore hope not," said Red seriously.

"Why?" queried Lorna.

" 'Cause he don't deserve such luck."

Lorna blushed. Red shoved back from the table and began rolling a cigaret. Finally he lifted his eyes and looked at the girl.

"Is Buck Pearson your father?" he asked steadily.

"I don't know."

"It's none of my business, an' I hope you'll excuse me for askin'. Out here we don't usually ask personal questions like that."

"There was nothing wrong in you asking that, Red—and I gave you the only answer possible. I'm looking for a Harold Johnson Pearson, and the man you know as Buck Pearson is Harold Pearson. I don't remember my father, and there is no photograph of him. He can easily affirm or deny the relationship, and I can not prove otherwise."

"Buck Pearson—" muttered Mojave. "He tried to run me out of town."

"Never mind that part of it," said Red.

"Wouldn't give me a drink or anythin' to eat."

Red shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"He'd take a bone away from a hungry dog," added Oklahoma.

"What are you tryin' to do?" demanded Red. "Suppose Buck is her father—you're paintin' him awful black."

"Is he really as bad as that?" asked Lorna seriously.

"Well, it's all in the point of view," replied Red. "Some folks think he's fine. Personally, me an' him ain't friends—but that don't mean he ain't all right. He could prob'ly tell you a lot of things about me—an' prove 'em."

"At least you are honest."

"Not necessarily." Red laughed. "It's funny how things happen. Bill Willis gits drunk an' upsets his stage, an' I find you behind a bush. You scared me; honest you did. I never seen a girl as pretty as you are in my life. I grabbed you to keep you from fallin', an' there I was, all scared stiff. In fact, I was so danged scared that I piled you on to my horse an' brought you here.

"You don't belong in this country. I could tell that right away. I says to myself, 'Red, this here lady is goin' to wake up an' git scared stiff at sight of you fellers.' But you didn't. An' in less than ten minutes you're callin' me Red an' I'm callin' you Lorna.

"Then, here comes Oklahomy, faunchin' round about me stealin' ten thousand dollars. Shore sounds interestin'. The money belongs to Buck Pearson, who might turn out to be your father."

"Now, if we only had a couple killin's an' a lynchin', it would seem like old times." Oklahoma laughed.

"Oh, I do hope I didn't bring you bad luck," said Lorna.

"That ain't worryin' me." Red smiled. "Now I was wonderin' about takin' you to town tonight. You'd have to go to the hotel, an' it ain't so awful good. Suppose you stay here tonight. We've got plenty room."

"I believe I should like that," she said. "My bags were on the stage, but I suppose they will be taken care of by the company."

"Shore. Suey Ong will fix up a room for you."

"I fix velly nice," Suey Ong grinned. "I fix so nice you likee stay all time."

"Thank you very much, Suey Ong; you are very kind."

"I likee lady alound house," said Suey Ong seriously. "Too muchee man, no good. Mebbeso—" Suey Ong wrinkled his forehead thoughtfully—"Buck Plea'-son say yo' not his gi'l, you come back stay hea'."

"Some of them dern chinks has got good idees," said Oklahoma.

CHAPTER IV

OLD MOJAVE MAKES A PLAY

FARO FLEMING removed his collar, replaced his patent leather shoes with a pair of soft slippers and stretched luxuriously in an old rocker. The room was small, but neatly furnished.

From the kitchen came the odor of cooking food, the rattle of utensils. Finally Mrs. De Lacey, slightly red of face, dressed entirely too well to be working in a kitchen, came to the doorway.

"Where is Buck?" she asked.

"Not coming," replied the pale faced gambler easily.

"Not coming? What's the idea, Faro?"

Faro yawned and shifted his position.

"Stage went into the ditch this afternoon, driver has concussion of the brain, and the strong box, containing ten thousand dollars of Buck's money, is missing."

"Lovely," said the woman sarcastically. "Somebody coppered the king, eh?"

"He's slightly upset."

"What about me? Here I've spent the whole afternoon in that hot kitchen, cooking things Buck Pearson never ate in his life—and he runs out on me. Damn the luck!"

Mrs. De Lacey stepped over to a mirror and looked at herself.

"Cooked to a cinder," she said.

"Fortunes of war, my dear sister," sighed Faro. "But always remember, the king can do no wrong."

"King!" It was a deliberate snort.

"Named himself." The gambler laughed.

"He would do that."

"Oh, well, Buck's all right. Business before love, my dear—and ten thousand is a lot of money."

"I wish I had it. I know I'd shake the dust of this godforsaken place off my shoes awful quick."

"Have a little patience, Fan. The first thing you know Buck will be writing poetry to you."

"More likely sob verses over the loss of ten thousand dollars."

"Don't be sarcastic. I'll appreciate that supper, even without the king at the head of the table. It might be worse. It has been said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach—and it might be well for me to try some of your fancy dishes, before he gets 'em."

"Slandering my cooking?"

"No—playing safe. Indigestion might raise the devil with a love match. And another thing—Buck intimated that he didn't like the way you look at Red Brant."

"That's a good sign." She laughed.

"Don't do anything foolish, Fan. Buck is worth half a million if he's worth a cent. Play the game and get your share of it."

The woman nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, that's true."

"And another thing, Buck thinks Red stole that ten thousand. In fact, so does the sheriff. But they can't make a move until Willis can prove that he had the strong box on the stage. I'm afraid Buck has a poor system on his stage line."

"How in the world would Red Brant steal that money?"

"Robbed the wreck before any one else got there. Red and the old cowboy they call Oklahoma saw the smash. Red stayed there while the old puncher came to town to get help, and when they went back Red was gone—and so was the money box."

"Even at that they will have a hard time proving Red took it, won't they?"

"Buck usually gets what he wants in this valley."

"Well, we may as well eat supper. Next time we'll get the king up here and feed him on ham and eggs."

"I imagine he knows more about ham and eggs than he does about fancy dishes. Don't waste recipes on him, Fan. I don't know exactly what happened to him down there at the wreck, but he's got a lump on his jaw and he had dirt on his back."

Fanny laughed callously.

"Somebody marked the king, eh?"

"It rather looked that way."

"The red ace?"

"Brant? Not likely. No; it couldn't have been, because I'm sure Buck hasn't seen Brant. But if Willis wakes up and says the strong box was on the stage when he left Pima City, it will be hard for Brant. Let's eat."

Faro Fleming went back to the gambling house after supper, and found Buck Pearson talking with a group of men in front of the bar.

"Willis died thirty minutes ago," Buck told Faro. "I'll have to go to Pima City and find out about that shipment of money. Here's another thing. We found a ticket in Willis' pocket—a ticket from Pima City to here—and there's a couple fancy valises on the stage, with no names on 'em. Shows that he had a passenger—but where in hell is that passenger?"

"I suppose you can find out in Pima City," said Faro.

"Yeah," growled Buck. "And in the meantime whoever got that money will have a chance to plant it plenty deep."

"Sorry you wasn't up to the house for supper, Buck. Fanny had a fine feed all ready for you."

"I'll shore have to apologize to her for that," said Buck. "I've been too upset to think of eatin'. Hope she didn't feel bad towards me."

"No, that's all right. I explained everything. Fanny understood how it was."

"That's fine. Well, I'm headin' for Pima City."

"Goin' alone?"

"No, I'm takin' Tex with me."

"Good luck. I hope you find the box wasn't shipped."

"Oh, it was shipped all right—an' I'll get the feller that took it off that wrecked stage. So long."

OLD MOJAVE did not stay in the ranch-house long after supper. He was not interested in the conversation; so he went out to the bunkhouse. Since Red Brant had picked him up in Gila Springs, Mojave had eaten more food than he had in the month previous. There had been no reason for Red's adoption of the derelict, except that he felt sorry for the old man. He told Mojave to stay as long as he liked.

Mojave could remember some of the things he wanted to do, but was unable to remember the things he had done. There was one thing Mojave coveted, and that was a six-shooter belonging to Brant. It was an ornate thing, finely engraved and with a pearl handle. It had hung on the wall in Red's room as a sort of ornament until Mojave saw it, surreptiously removed and carried it away to the bunkhouse, where he carefully put it out of sight.

There were plenty of .45 caliber cartridges in the bunkhouse, and Mojave had loaded the gun. He probably had no idea of stealing it from Red, but he couldn't resist handling it. Tonight he took it from inside the bed roll, carried it outside, where he humped against the bunkhouse and fondled the gun.

Less than a hundred feet away was the lighted window of the house, where Lorna Pearson, Red Brant and Oklahoma were talking. The starlight was bright, and Mojave's attention was suddenly attracted to a rider who had halted on the far side of the corral. The old man watched him intently. The horseman dismounted, crawled through the fence and crossed the corral, where he stopped, apparently watching the house.

After awhile he began moving slowly toward the building, as though intending to peer through the window. Old Mojave got slowly to his feet, the gun gripped in his right hand. He had no idea who this man might be. At any rate, he decided, the fellow's intentions were not honest or he would not be sneaking up to a window.

The man was past him now, crouched low, moving cautiously. He was nearly at the window when Mojave cut loose with the gun, at the same time yelling at the top of his lungs for Red Brant.

The man whirled and started running back toward the corral, but old Mojave was lumbering along to cut him off from his horse. Again and again the .45 roared, and the bullets whined off the hard ground. Both men went through the corral fence; the frightened horse jerked back snapping off the bridle reins, and went galloping away.

Then the man whirled and went out past the barn, heading for the brushy hills while Mojave kept right on after him. Red Brant and Oklahoma were yelling from the house and trying to find out what was going on, but Mojave was too busy to stop and answer them.

There was no real reason for old Mojave to chase this man up that long slope through the brush. But he followed, tearing his clothes on *manzanita*, going it blind, when an *ocotillo* stalk slashed him across the face. Over the ridge he went. Somewhere ahead of him sounded the echoing report of a shot, followed closely by another. But this did not stop Mojave. He had an idea that this man was shooting at him, and he wanted to get close enough to take another shot himself.

Suddenly he crashed through a bunch of dry brush, his feet went out into space, and he fell head-over-heels down through an old washout, falling and rolling clear to the bottom. He had the feeling that some one shot at him from close quarters, and it seemed that he either heard or saw running horses.

The old man was not knocked unconscious, or seriously injured by his headlong fall, but he was badly dazed, his eyes filled with dirt. Everything was quiet when his head cleared. Blood was running down over his lips from a cut on his cheek, and he lighted a match to see in what sort of place he had landed. As the light flared up he grunted softly. Almost at his feet was a metal box, padlocked. On it was stenciled in black letters, Pima Valley Stage Co.

Mojave rubbed his chin, after the match died out, wondering what that box might be. He dimly remembered something about a strong box. Somebody had talked about it, but he couldn't remember what was said.

"Anyway," he said aloud, "I'll pack it back with me. That's the best thing to do, 'cause I'll forgit where I found it."

So Mojave picked it up, hugged it to his bosom and went stumbling away down the little arroyo in the darkness.

Those at the Bar M had no idea what was happening. The first shot had drawn Red Brant and Oklahoma out of the house in time to see the flash of the shots in the corral, but they were unable to tell where the shooters had gone. In fact, they had been unable to see whether it was one or a dozen men firing.

They were searching down around the stable, when the last two shots echoed far out in the hills—just where, they were unable even to guess.

They went back to the house, where Lorna and Suey Ong stood on the porch.

"Can't find a thing," said Red. "By golly, that *was* queer."

"Somebody shore went hawg wild with a gun," observed Oklahoma.

"Wasn't there two more shots fired away off somewhere?" asked Lorna.

"There was," nodded Red. "Say, I wonder where Mojave went?"

"He ain't got no gun," said Oklahoma, who did not know about the purloined weapon.

"That's right," admitted Red. "But we better locate the old man."

There was a light in the bunkhouse, but Mojave was not there. They searched the stable and sheds, then came back to the house.

"Do you reckon somebody chased the old coot away?" asked Oklahoma.

"Who would chase him?" queried Red.

"Isn't he—well, rather queer?" asked Lorna.

"That's him," replied Oklahoma dryly. "Queer—that describes him."

"Aw, he ain't crazy," said Red. "He jist don't remember where he put his hat, thasall."

"Nor nothin' else," growled Oklahoma. "Ain't worth a dime to himself nor anybody else. Red jist picked him up, like he would a stray dawg."

"Starvin'," said Red seriously. "I fed him and he follered me home. What can I do with him? Can't turn him away. Gosh, you never can tell—I might be like that some day. I shore hope nobody has hurt him."

"Oh, he'll show up for breakfast." Oklahoma laughed. "Mebbe he went plumb loco an' just started shootin'."

"What would he shoot with?" demanded Red.

"That's right. The minute I git a bright idea you blow it out."

"Oh, I do hope no one got hurt," said Lorna.

"Lotta crazy Arizonans shootin' in the dark never hurt nobody," said Oklahoma. "Now, if that happened down in Oklahomy—"

"They'd all git killed," finished Red. "I'd rather live here, where they ain't so danged accurate in the dark. All the Oklahomans I've ever seen lived in dugouts down there—down underground in the dark, where they have to learn to see in the dark. Take 'em out in the bright sunlight an' they go blind."

"Really?" asked Lorna.

"Yea-a-a-ah, shore," drawled Red.

"That ain't true, ma'am," denied Oklahoma.

"Can't prove it by you," said Red seriously. "You was brought up to this country by a sheepherder before your eyes was open."

"Ma'am," said Oklahoma, "this here Red Brant is the biggest liar in the world."

"That's coverin' a lot of territory." Red laughed.

"I'll take back that statement," said Oklahoma. "I'll say I *think* he's the biggest liar in the world, an' I'll always believe he is until I find a bigger one."

"That's better," said Red. "Now, if we could locate Mojave I'd be satisfied."

"Aw, he'll come driftin' in after while. I wouldn't waste any sleep over him."

CHAPTER V

HASHKNIFE AND SLEEPY RIDE OVER THE HILL

THREE men were seated in the little lobby of a hotel in Pima City that same evening. One man was past middle age—a big hulk of a man, dressed in corduroys, flannel shirt, laced boots and a Stetson hat. A huge cigar was gripped between his strong teeth, as he sat tilted back in a chair, his hands locked around one knee.

Beside him, also tilted back in a chair, was a long, lean faced cowboy, dressed in range clothes. He had a large nose, slightly hooked, a wide, thin lipped mouth, and a pair of keen gray eyes nested in grin wrinkles. His cheek bones were prominent and his chin jutted just a trifle.

Beside him sat another cowboy. He was shorter and heavier than his companion, broad of shoulder and slightly bow legged. His features were strong, his face deeply graved, and his blue eyes seemed to look out upon the world with innocent astonishment. Both men wore holstered guns, and their belts and holsters showed plenty of wear. Bronzed from days of sun and wind until they were as dark as an aborigines, they looked granite hard.

"It shore seems funny to run across you here, Jim," said Hashknife Hartley, the tall cowboy. "Been more than fifteen years since we saw you."

Jim Marshall, the corduroy clad one, twisted the cigar in his lips and smiled.

"Just about seventeen years, Hashknife. But I've heard about you—plenty. Heard about Sleepy, too."

Sleepy Stevens, the blue eyed puncher, grinned widely.

"Thasso?"

"Whatcha doin' these days—buyin' cows, Jim?" asked Hashknife.

"No; I ain't bought a cow for seven years."

"Somebody die and leave you money?" asked Sleepy.

Marshall laughed and shook his head.

"No such luck. No, I'll tell you: I've been with the Nevada State prison all that time. Happened to be a friend of the governor at that time, and landed a good job."

Hashknife looked him over quizzically.

"Then you ain't down here for your health, eh?"

"Partly. I was gettin' almighty fat around the waist, settin' at a desk all the time, so I jumped at a chance to get out and around a few weeks. Do me a lot of good and I might possibly get track of a man we want."

"Somebody pull out on you?" asked Sleepy.

Marshall laughed and scratched the back of his thick neck.

"Yeah, he did. Do either of you remember Joe Cross? You probably wouldn't, 'cause you didn't range much in Nevada. Anyway, this Cross was a bad *hombre*. Tinhorn gambler an' gunman. Slated for an early grave with his boots on, but had some lucky breaks.

"Finally he got to stickin' up stages. It worked great for him at first, an' he thought he had a lifetime job, I reckon. Finally he pulled one, in which the guard he shot didn't stay dead—until after he shot Cross. Cross wasn't downed, an' proceeded to rob the stage, but we caught him. That is, I didn't catch him, but he was caught. Sent up for life.

"Well, he was a fine prisoner for two years, when he got hold of a gun. Nobody knows how a prisoner, especially a lifer, ever gets a gun; but they do sometimes. So Joe Cross made a getaway. He pulled out in the middle of the afternoon, an' we got him next day just before noon, not over six miles from the pen."

Marshall laughed softly.

"The poor fool went in for a swim. Can you imagine that? With every man in the country lookin' for him, he went swimmin' in a creek six miles from where he escaped. Well, the guards caught him dressin', an' they didn't take any chances; so they bored him plenty. One .30-30 hit him a glancin' blow in the face, one tore a hole in his shoulder an' another went through his leg.

"We didn't think he was goin' to live, but he was tough. Ruined his face completely, an' knocked his thinkin' apparatus all out of kilter. No, there wasn't much of the old Joe Cross left when he came out of the hospital. That was nearly fifteen years ago. Since then he has been an old man, harmless. Can't remember anythin'. No, he ain't crazy—just absent minded.

"We let him putter around the yard, take care of flowers an' all that. An' one day he walked away on us, an' we ain't seen him since. Has always been crazy about prospectin', an' we figured that he hit out for the minin' country. Mebbe he's starved to death by this time. Anyway, it gave me a chance to spend a few weeks runnin' around—an' here I am."

"How long has this Cross person been loose?" asked Hashknife.

"Possibly three months . . . But how do you two happen to be here?"

"Oh, we've been punchin' cows for the XL8 outfit, six, seven miles south of here."

"Still with 'em?"

"They've sold out. We shipped the last car today."

"Where are you goin' from here?"

"Who knows?" Hashknife smiled. "Somewhere over on the other side of a hill, I reckon."

"Still lookin' for the other side of the hill, eh?"

"That's right, Jim—still wonderin' what's over there. It's a great game—wonderin'. An' sometimes it's a great game, after you get over there an' find out. You goin' to be here long?"

"Pullin' out in the mornin'. Reckon I'll go down around Bisbee an' Tombstone."

"Uh-huh. Well, I wish you luck; but I hope you don't find him."

"Why not?" asked Marshall quickly.

" 'Cause I figure the State has made him pay enough. How old is he?"

"About forty-five or forty-seven—but he looks sixty."

"An' can't remember?"

"Not a danged thing."

"Why punish him any more? Let him go ahead an' prospect."

Marshall laughed and got to his feet.

"You'd turn 'em all loose."

"Well—" Hashknife smiled—"I'd make a few exceptions."

"Plenty, I'm afraid. Well, I'll see you in the mornin', boys."

"All right, Jim."

Hashknife yawned and got to his feet. He seemed to be over seven feet tall with his sombrero on.

"Goin' to hit the hay?" asked Sleepy.

"Too early. Let's take a *pasear* an' see what's goin' on."

They crossed the street to a saloon, where a small poker game was in progress; but neither of them were in a poker

mood. After watching the game a few minutes they sauntered out and stood on the edge of the wooden sidewalk, discussing what to do next. Diagonally across the street was another saloon, the lower half of the windows curtained.

THE TWO cowboys happened to be looking toward the front of this saloon when suddenly there was a flash followed by the unmistakable report of a heavy revolver. They heard the thud of a falling body, a sharp cry, then the sound of quick footsteps on the sidewalk.

Some one flung the saloon door open, illuminating a space of the sidewalk. Hashknife and Sleepy ran over as several men came from the open doorway. People were coming from every direction. Some one ordered some one else to get a doctor.

They carried the fallen man into the saloon and stretched him out on the floor. It was Jim Marshall, the man from the penitentiary. The left breast of his flannel shirt was soaked with blood. No one questioned Hashknife's right to make an examination, which was very brief.

"Prob'ly never knew what hit him," said Hashknife.

"Didn't I see you talkin' with him in the hotel awhile ago?" asked a cowboy.

"You did. His name's Jim Marshall an' he's from the Nevada penitentiary. He was an old friend of mine, an' I ain't seen him for years."

"What was he doin' down here?" asked a man curiously.

"He didn't say," replied Hashknife; and added, "Except that he was takin' a vacation, an' was leavin' tomorrow."

The doctor's examination was as brief as Hashknife's.

"Notify the sheriff and coroner at Gila Springs," he said crisply. "This man was dead before he struck the sidewalk. Did any of you see the shot fired?"

"We saw the shot," replied Hashknife. "Me an' my pardner was on the sidewalk in front of that saloon across the street, an' we saw the flash of the gun. Them curtains across the windows cut off the light, an' we wasn't able to see the men; but I think the one who fired the shot ran back through the alley. Anyway, that's my impression."

"Goin' to be kinda hard to pile the deadwood on anybody for this job," remarked a cowboy.

"I seen this feller in the next saloon down the street a few minutes ago," offered another cowboy.

"Talkin' to anybody?" asked Hashknife.

"Nope; just lookin' around."

"The coroner will probably want you as a witness," said the doctor to Hashknife, who nodded.

He and Sleepy went slowly back to the hotel, where they sat down in their little room. Hashknife rolled a cigaret, stretched out on the bed and smoked thoughtfully. Sleepy humped over on the edge of the bed and slowly drew off his boots.

"I don't think much of this country," said Sleepy, "but I reckon I'll have to get used to it."

"Why will you?" asked Hashknife dreamily.

"Hell!" snorted Sleepy. "You think I don't know *you?*"

"It couldn't have been Joe Cross," muttered Hashknife. "Not if he's like Jim said he was—no memory or anythin'. Jim's been at the pen a long time, an' mebbe he bumped into some man he didn't treat so good up there. Anyway, he didn't give Jim a chance—jist plugged him."

"Jim Marshall don't mean much to me," said Sleepy.

"I'd like to know who killed him—an' why."

"I know you do"—wearily. "That's your failin', Hashknife. Why did you say we seen that shot fired? Now we've got to wait for the coroner to hold a meetin'."

"Hangin' crape don't become you, pardner." Hashknife smiled.

"I ain't hangin' no crape. I know what it means. Hell, ain't I had it for years? Yessir, for years I've been follerin' you—an' I know you can't quit tryin' to find out who killed Cock Robin."

Hashknife smiled at the ceiling, while the smoke drifted lazily from his nostrils.

"Poor old Jim Marshall has gone over the biggest hill of all, an' I wonder what he found over there, Sleepy."

"You keep pokin' into things that don't concern you, an' you'll find out."

"I know it; an' still I've got to keep pokin'."

"Yeah, damn the luck—an' I've got to keep pokin' with you."

All of which was very true. Henry—Hashknife—Hartley would have to keep poking until he found out who killed Jim Marshall, and why he was killed. Anything that hinted of mystery acted as a challenge to Hashknife. Blessed, or cursed, with the brain of a detective, he could not go on until he had found the solution of the mystery.

Hashknife, born the son of an itinerant minister of the gospel, who rode an old white horse and preached in the bunkhouses, saloons or wherever he might find an audience, was obliged to earn his own living at an age when other boys were at school. Being keen minded, he had educated himself outside a school room, but had no ambition to be anything but a cowboy. The hills fascinated him, and he wanted to see what was on the other side of them. From the Montana ranges he had drifted into the Southwest, where on the old ranch which gave him his nickname he met, and became the friend of, Dave Stevens, known as Sleepy; a happy-go-lucky cowboy, who also wondered what might be on the other side of the hill.

Their wandering activities had made them marked men, and death had struck at them numerous times; struck so many times and missed, that they had become confirmed fatalists.

CHAPTER VI

BUCK PEARSON'S DAUGHTER

SPECK SMALLEY, the lanky deputy sheriff, was in Pima City early the following morning, and viewed the remains of Jim Marshall. Doctor Henry Blevins, the coroner, came with him, and proceeded to question everybody in reach.

He quizzed Hashknife and Sleepy, who informed him that he really should appoint a coroner's jury and ask these questions under oath. It amused Speck greatly to hear anybody advising Doc Blevins, who had an idea that he knew everything.

Buck Pearson and Tex Thorne had stayed all night in Pima City, and a cowboy from the XL8 outfit told Hashknife who the two men were.

"I asked 'em for a job last night," he said, "but they didn't jump at the chance. Pearson owns a mighty big outfit, an' they tell me he's a good man to work for. Mebbe I struck him at a bad time. You see, he owns the bank in Gila Springs an' he owns the stage line between here an' there. The other day the driver got drunk, ditched the stage an' killed hisself off. That wasn't so awful, but he had ten thousand dollars in the strong box, an' it's gone."

Hashknife's ears pricked up.

"Ten thousand dollars, eh?"

"Uh-huh. Chicken feed for a feller like Pearson, they tell me."

The coroner lost no time in impaneling a jury. The witnesses had little testimoney to offer. Hashknife and Sleepy were the only ones who knew Marshall; the only ones who saw the flash of the shot which had killed him. The jury brought in the usual verdict, and the coroner proceeded to get into telegraphic touch with the Nevada State prison.

Hashknife was curious to know why the deputy, instead of the sheriff, had come to Pima City. He asked Speck Smalley about it, and the lanky deputy said:

"I couldn't find the sheriff. He pulled out last night. Didn't say where he was goin' or nothin'. An' when this here feller rides in from Pima City, all excited an' full of talk, I gits me an idea that everybody down here was bein' murdered in the dark. That's how come I'm here, rep'sentin' the law."

"What about that ten thousand dollars that was stolen?"

"Oh, yeah! Well, I forgot to ask Buck Pearson about it. It wasn't settled as to whether or not that money was on the stage, an' Buck came down here last night to find out about it."

Buck Pearson came along and Speck asked him about it.

"It was on the stage," replied Buck.

"Well, what do you think we better do?"

"I'll ask the prosecutin' attorney when I get back," replied Buck. "It looks like a cinch bet to me."

Buck went on and in a few minutes he and Tex Thorne rode out of town, heading back to Gila Springs. The coroner decided to stay in Pima City until some disposal had been made of Marshall's body, but Speck wanted to go back home; so Hashknife and Sleepy rode away with him.

OLD MOJAVE was at the Bar M that morning. He had a few scratches on his face and hands, but offered no explanation. Red asked him who did all the shooting, and he looked blankly at Red. Oklahoma was disgusted. Lorna even tried her hand at questioning Mojave, but without result.

She had decided to go to Gila Springs; so Red hitched up the only harness horse on the place to a rickety buckboard and took her to town. She claimed her baggage at the stage station, and Red went with her to the hotel.

Gila Springs was curious. They wanted to know where this pretty girl came from and who she was. Why was she with Red Brant? The populace sauntered past the hotel, where Red sat talking with Lorna, much to his amusement.

"I shall have a talk with Buck Pearson as soon as possible," said Lorna. "If he should happen to be my father, there are some things I am duty bound to give him. But unless in my own opinion he belies the reputation you have given him, I shall not stay here."

"Well," said Red, "you know your own business, Lorna. I'd like to see you stay here. Why didn't you pick out anybody else for a father? Lotsa good old fellers around here—an' you pick Buck Pearson? If Buck did accept you as his daughter, and you stayed here, I'd never get within gunshot of you. Buck hates me like smallpox."

Lorna laughed.

"He wouldn't put me in a cage."

"No; but he'd put me in a wooden overcoat if he saw me with you."

"I might bring peace between you," said Lorna.

Red looked at her, his eyes laughing.

"I'm afraid not. This war of mine is inherited, Lorna. You see, Old Angus fought Buck, because he hated him; an' then Angus gave me the Bar M because I didn't like Buck."

"He must have loved you—to give you that ranch, Red."

"Loved me?" Red's eyes grew wistful. "I never thought of that. I dunno. No, I don't believe it. He knew I was obstinate—that I'd never sell out to Buck. You know, an old fighter like Angus carries his war plumb to his grave."

"Why do you hate Buck Pearson?"

"Why? Oh, I dunno."

"Don't you know the Bible says for us to love our enemies, to do good to those who do evil against us."

"Shore,"—smiling. "An' it also goes ahead an' tells about God smitin' his enemies, don't it? He didn't lay back an' say, 'Go ahead an' grab everythin' in sight, brand all your neighbor's calves, an' when you've cleaned out his range, go ahead an' run all his horses over into the next county; an' when you've finished on that, jist move right in, take his water holes.' Nossir, he didn't say that."

"No, I suppose He didn't."

"Anyway, I'd rather talk about you," said Red seriously. "You won't jist go ahead an' pull out, if Buck turns you down?"

"Well, I wouldn't go away without saying goodby to you, Red."

"I hope not. Well, I'd better let you go up to your room, now. I'll prob'ly be in again this evenin'—if I could see you."

"I suppose you could, Red."
"Well, that's great."

FARO FLEMING had seen Lorna with Red, and as soon as he left the hotel Faro went over to look at the old dog-eared register. There was the entry—Lorna Pearson, Chicago. The old proprietor of the hotel looked keenly at Faro after the latter's scrutiny of the register.

"Know who she is?" he asked cautiously.

"How could I?" countered Faro. "Do you?"

"I heard somethin',"—confidentially. "She was talkin' with Brant, an' I heard him say—" the old man glanced cautiously around. "He said, 'If Buck did accept you as his daughter—' I didn't hear the rest."

Faro smiled thinly.

"I wonder what her game is."

"Buck ain't got no daughter, has he?"

"He never mentioned one."

"Uh-huh. Mebbe she's one of them adventuresses you hear about."

Faro laughed and shook his head.

"No, that wouldn't work—unless he *did* have a daughter. I guess we better wait and see what Buck finds out from her."

"Uh-huh. By golly, she's pretty enough."

"I noticed that, Ben. But how in the devil did Red Brant get hold of her?"

"She got them there valises of hers at the stage station."

"Those valises that were on the wrecked stage?"

"Yeah, I reckon they was."

"The plot thickens." Faro smiled.

"The what?"

"The plot."

"I didn't hear about it."

"Probably not—it isn't generally known," replied Faro dryly, and walked out.

It was possibly two hours later when Buck and Tex rode into town and left their horses at the hitch-rack beside the saloon. Buck intended to have a talk with the prosecuting attorney at once, but Faro signaled him to come on to the saloon. Inside the place, Faro took Buck back to their private office.

"What did you want?" asked Buck.

"Don't laugh when I tell you that there's a mighty pretty girl over at the hotel, registered under the name of Lorna Pearson—and I believe she is here to claim you as her father."

Buck's eyes narrowed thoughtfully as he slowly sat down in a chair.

"My daughter, eh?" he said softly.

"Lorna Pearson from Chicago."

"Yea-a-ah?" Buck's half shut eyes were focussed on a lithograph on the opposite wall. "Did she tell you all this, Faro?"

"I haven't spoken to her. Red Brant brought her to town in his buckboard, and they collected her baggage at the stage station. It was the two valises that were on the wrecked stage. The hotel keeper heard her talking with Red Brant, and Red mentioned you as her father."

"Is Red Brant tryin' to pull somethin' on me?"

"It does look queer, Buck."

"Mm-m-m, An' you say she's over at the hotel now?"

"Yes. Did you ever have a daughter, Buck?"

Buck's eyes shifted to Faro.

"That's a leadin' question, Faro."

"Excuse me—I'm sorry."

"All right." Buck got to his feet. "I reckon I'll go over an' see what she's got to say. Anybody else know about this?"

"I haven't spoken to any one. The hotel keeper—"

"He'll keep still, 'cause I own the hotel, now. See you later."

Buck went straight across the street and into the hotel. Lorna was coming down the stairs and Buck stopped short, looking at her. She came to the bottom of the flight, and he spoke to her.

"You are Miss Pearson?" he asked.

"Yes, I am Miss Pearson."

"I'm Buck Pearson," he said.

She looked curiously at him and held out her slim hand.

"I am glad to meet you," she said. Buck took her hand gingerly and muttered something.

"Suppose we sit down," she suggested. The hotel keeper came down the stairs, and Buck motioned for him to keep going.

"Didja want to talk to me about somethin'?" asked Buck.

"How did you know?"

Buck smiled coldly.

"A man heard Red Brant talkin' to you."

"Oh, I see."

"He's a bad *hombre*."

"*Hombre?*"

"Spanish for man."

"Oh, I see. You mean the man who overheard us talking?"

"No—Red Brant."

"Oh!" Then, "You are Harold Johnson Pearson?"

"Yeah."

"You were the husband of Marion Sherr?"

Buck's eyes narrowed perceptibly.

"Well, suppose I was?"

"I am Lorna Pearson, your daughter."

Buck looked her over coldly.

"Are you?"

"Don't I look like my mother?"

"Not so very much."

Lorna smiled at him.

"Queer, isn't it? Not at all what you might expect a father and daughter to say upon meeting for the first time in years. Perfect strangers. But it is quite the natural thing. We would naturally have no affection for each other. I do not remember you. Mother said you never had any affection for me."

"Why did you come out here?" asked Buck.

"To find you."

"Yea-a-ah?"

"Mother wished me to do this. You see, she died two years ago."

"Did she?" Buck did not seem interested.

"She never expected me to find you, because she felt sure you had changed your name under the circumstances—but that is past. She—"

"How did you find me?" Buck broke in.

"A girl friend of mine works in the office of a packing company in Chicago, and she told me of a big cattleman out here, named Harold J. Pearson."

"An' you came all the way out here to find if I was the one, eh?"

"I had promised my mother."

"Uh-huh. An' what was her idea of havin' me found?"

Lorna reached in her handbag and drew out a sealed letter. There was no name or address on it. She handed it to Buck.

"Perhaps this will explain," she said softly. "I do not know what it contains—it was for your eyes alone."

BUCK took the letter, turning it over in his hands. His lips tightened and he stared blankly at the floor for several moments before opening the envelop. The letter was written shakily, but was legible:

Harold:

The doctors have given their verdict, and unless they are mistaken, this is my last letter. I feel that you are somewhere in the world, and it is my last prayer that you receive this. I have wronged you more than I believed it possible for a wife to wrong a husband, and if you have lived in a hell of my making—what of me, the maker?

Insane jealousy prompted me to point you out as the murderer of Morgan Sherr, my brother. I freely admit the lie. I would have, in my jealous rage, sent you to a murderer's grave, rather than to lose you to another woman. And later, after you were gone, I found that my suspicions of that other woman were unfounded.

Thank God you were able to escape the penalty of my lies. I have prayed that they would never find you, eaten out my heart in hate of myself. They say that my broken pride over what you did has made me an old, old woman long before my time. But they know the truth now. Your name is cleared—but too late, unless this letter finds you. I do not ask you to forgive me. Only a good and forgiving God could pardon a sin like mine.

Your business, which was turned over to me, has prospered far beyond your dreams. It is your money—not mine. Lorna does not know everything. I loved her too much to ever tell her all the truth. If this letter ever reaches you, Harold, come back and claim what belongs to you. You are a rich man, and as free as you

were before that night I sent you away, a fugitive from justice. There is nothing more to say except goodby.

—MARION SHERR PEARSON

Buck studied the letter for a long time before he folded it and replaced it in the envelop. He seemed to have forgotten the girl. At that moment Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens came in, their spurs rattling across the rough floor as they went to the little desk; but Buck did not look up.

The old hotel keeper led the two cowboys up the stairs, complaining about his rheumatism. Buck lifted his head and looked at Lorna.

"Your mother made a lot of money, eh?" he said.

Lorna nodded.

"Yes, I suppose she did. The estate is worth over a million, I understand."

Buck drew in a deep breath.

"I dunno," he said heavily. "Suppose you come out to the ranch." He considered her for several moments. "I don't reckon you'd care much about this country. Folks out here ain't your kind."

"I believe I should easily learn to like it," she replied.

"Uh-huh. Well, I'll get a buggy an' take you out. Stay a few days, anyway. We've got room for you."

Buck got up and walked heavily out. Gila Springs watched him go to the livery stable, saw him drive a rig back to the hotel; and then they saw him drive out of town with this pretty girl beside him. Tex Thorne, half drunk, watched him from the saloon window. Tex was big and brawny, handsome in a swarthy way, and very close to Buck Pearson.

Tex watched them leave town and came back to the bar, where he announced aloud, "Well, I'll be damned!" and proceeded to drink some more liquor. Faro Fleming subscribed to Tex's feelings. His plans were to have Fanny marry Buck, and they were shaping nicely. But this woman might change things . . .

Speck Smalley saw Lorna, but was not interested. He wanted to find Mica Miller, the sheriff. Mica had been missing since the night before. Speck knew that Mica had ridden out of Gila Springs just after dark—and that was as much as anybody knew. Speck inquired around, until all Gila Springs became interested in the missing sheriff.

During the ride from Pima City, Hashknife had been told the fairly complete history of Pima Valley. Speck Smalley had lived there most of his life, and he was fully qualified to tell all about it.

He had a good chance to see Red Brant, who seemed to be a special obsession of the sheriff's office, although Hashknife could not see where Red had done anything particularly wrong. He decided that Red was disliked because Buck Pearson disliked him. Red seemed like a normal young cowpuncher, perhaps a trifle wilder than the rest, possibly more capable.

Hashknife and Sleepy were in front of the hotel, shortly after their arrival, when Ab Terrill and Tony Ariza, two of the Pearson cowboys, rode into town, leading the sheriff's horse. Both reins had been snapped off short. The boys had picked the animal up a mile east of town.

"Somethin' has done happened to Mica Miller," pronounced Speck Smalley.

"Prob'ly walkin' home," said Terrill. "If he'd rein-break his horse or use a tie rope—"

"Horse prob'ly stepped on the reins an' busted 'em."

"Not likely. Look at them chain links—all stretched out thataway. Nossir, that horse sagged back—scared, prob'ly—an' busted 'em."

"Anyway, the sheriff's missin' an' I ain't got no idea where to look for him. Don't even know where he went. Never said a word to me."

Shaking his head disconsolately, Speck led the horse away to the stable, with Hashknife following him. Later they sat in the office and discussed Mica Miller. As far as Hashknife could determine, Mica Miller had no enemies. He had never had any trouble in the southern end of the valley.

"Him an' Old Angus never hitched very good," said Speck.

"We can pass Angus." Hashknife smiled. "What about Red Brant?"

Speck shook his head.

"They was frien'ly enemies. Red laughed at Mica all the time. Said Mica wasn't much of a sheriff an' asked him how much of his salary he split with Buck Pearson."

"Pearson an' Miller were good friends, eh?"

"Oh, shore. Pearson had him elected. Now, there's Oklahomy—"

"What about him?"

"Mica told me a little of it. Buck Pearson hinted that Red had somethin' to do with stealin' that strong box off the wrecked stage, an' Oklahomy knocked Buck off his horse."

"Yeah? An' then did he have trouble with the sheriff?"

"No, he didn't. Mica believes in bein' neutral."

"Do you reckon they'll arrest Red for stealin' that money?"

"I dunno. The prosecutin' attorney here is kinda hard headed. Buck don't run his office—none to speak about. He'll prob'ly have a talk with Red an' see what Red's got to say. 'Course, there ain't a bit of evidence, except that Red was there jist after the wreck, an' when Oklahomy got back with the rest of the gang Red wasn't there. They'll likely want to know where Red went."

"What about that pretty girl I saw Red with?"

"I dunno," grunted Speck. "Jist now I'm more interested in findin' Mica Miller. Wish I knowed where to look. Mica ain't so damn awful big, an' there's a lot of country to look over."

"How many men has Red got workin' for him?" asked Hashknife.

"Just him an' old Oklahomy, 'less you want to count Suey Ong, the chink cook, an' old Mojave."

"Old Mojave?"

"Yeah; a damn old relic that drifted in here awhile ago. Prospector—half starved. Queer old coot. Red kinda adopted him, I reckon."

Hashknife's mind flashed back to what Jim Marshall had said about Joe Cross, the escaped convict.

"Some of them old desert rats are queer characters," said Hashknife.

"This 'n' shore is, Hartley. He can't remember nothin'. Them kind ain't got no business prospectin'."

"That's right," agreed Hashknife.

He was satisfied that this man was the one Marshall was looking for. Joe Cross, ex-bandit, bad man—now a man without a memory . . .

Speck got up and walked over to the door, as two cowboys galloped up and dismounted quickly. It was Buzz Brown and Jack Ralston, two more of the Pearson outfit. They were both a little breathless, both trying to talk at the same time.

"All right—you tell him," panted Ralston.

"We found Mica Miller," gulped Brown. "Deader 'n hell! Down south of the Bar M ranch-house. He's there on the edge of a li'l arroyo an'—"

TO BE CONTINUED

One Man's Flag

By L. PATRICK GREENE

A Story of South Africa

IT SEEMED such a trivial thing to arouse angry, elemental passions. Only a flag, crudely made from cheap, badly dyed cloth, which barred the electric blue of a bit of African sky with black, red and white. But the people of the isolated frontier settlement were swamped by a flood of patriotic fanaticism.

The burly sergeant of the mounted police had just read the official declaration of war to them. A band played patriotic airs.

For a long time no one had noticed the flag which flew from a crooked pole in front of the building which crested the rise. But, suddenly, an errant gust of wind billowed it, showing it for what it was, and a child cried—

"Look at that one!"

And instantly the temper of the gathering had changed. The men made heated resolutions. A lynching party was hastily formed, a rope secured.

"Easy, fellows," said big Sergeant Burke. "We can't do things that way."

Then some one shouted, a lilt of laughter in his voice—

"I'll eat my hat if that flag pole ain't planted in front of Papa Haydn's store!"

And instantly the tension disappeared.

Until this moment no one had given thought to the identity of the owner of the flag. Their anger had been leveled at a nation, at an idea, not at an individual. Now that consideration was forced upon them, they laughed happily.

Papa Haydn!

"I bet the old codger thinks he's run up the Union Jack," one man guffawed.

"I remember," Larry Barnes said reflectively, "that once Papa Haydn bought himself a new hat and decided to give his old one to a nigger. But he gave the new one to the nigger and kept the old one himself—and never knew the difference. Bet he's done something like that now; burned the flag he meant to fly, and flew the flag he meant to burn."

"Maybe it's no mistake at all," a newcomer to the *dorp* said timidly. "Haydn's a German name, and—"

"There ain't a kid in the *dorp*," Larry Barnes said, "that doesn't know in which pocket Papa Haydn keeps his candy."

"Just the same," the newcomer said doggedly, "Haydn's a German name."

"What of it?" Larry Barnes demanded. "We're going to have a hell of a time if we've got to go round suspecting everybody with a German name. The colony's full of them. Most of 'em are Boers, anyway. But for Papa Haydn, I'm telling you, this *dorp* wouldn't be the flourishing settlement it is today. We wanted to call it Haydnburg—but he wouldn't have it.

" 'Well,' we said, 'give it a name, Papa.'

"And he named it Williamstown."

"The German emperor's name is William," the newcomer exclaimed triumphantly, then dodged quickly to avoid the blow Barnes aimed at him. Sergeant Burke intervened again.

"That's no way to behave, boys," he said. "You, no doubt, Mr. Barnes, will get all the fighting you want 'fore long. And you, Mr. Jackson, being a newcomer, it ain't to be expected that you could know all about Papa Haydn. So your suspicions are natural. Just the same," he continued, scowling thoughtfully, "that flag's got to come down. I suggest that you gentlemen, who was so eager a little while ago to form a lynching party, go up and tell Papa Haydn all about it."

But the sun had risen high above the horizon and its scorching heat seemed to beat down the first excited wave of patriotic enthusiasm. Besides, Papa Haydn's store was built on the crest of a steep rise. There seemed to be no sense in toiling up there in the heat just to tell the old man he'd made a mistake.

"Let it stay—it'll hurt nobody," Larry Barnes said, voicing the sentiments of them all. "What's the good of hurting Papa's feelings? Some of us'll go up there after dark and run up the Jack in place of the rag that's there now. He'll never spot the difference."

The sergeant shook his head.

"I'll go up and tell him myself after I've had skoff," he said. "All this war talk's made me damned hungry."

ON THE *stoep* of his store Papa Haydn waited impatiently.

He was seated in a wicker rocking chair which creaked dismally every time he shifted his weight. With every forward rock he blinked short sightedly up at the flag; when he went backward, the *stoep* roof cutting off the flag from his vision, he looked over the dreary expanse of barren land beyond the *dorp*.

At such times his imagination peopled the naked veld with armies of men marching to victory, and his mild blue eyes—like a frog's they looked behind the strong lensed glasses he wore—were lighted by the pride of race.

Across his knees rested an antique carbine. A cartridge belt was buckled about his bulging waist. A cheap white helmet, several sizes too small for him, perched insecurely on his head. It slanted at a rakish angle over one ear.

Back and forth he rocked. Presently he whistled, tunelessly, a patriotic air in time to the creakings. He looked then, his full lips pouting through the graying beard which framed his face, like a cherub suddenly grown adult.

He rose to his feet, shouldered his car-

bine and marched up and down the length of the *stoep;* his face set sternly, his stride precisely military.

"Left, right! Left, right! Halt!" Heels clicked together. "About face!"

He was conscious of a glow of pride at his successful pivot.

"Left, right! Left, right . . ."

Up and down he marched, looking like an ancient kewpie—or benign grandfather—playing soldier.

Shouts, the blare of a band, floated on the air to Papa Haydn's ears. His stern expression wavered; a happy smile chased it completely away. He tried to hum the tune the band was playing, halting his march so that he could listen better.

Then it came to him that he was not acting as a soldier should. His lips closed in a tight line, the smile left his face. He gripped his carbine more firmly and resumed his sentry-go up and down the *stoep,* lengthening his stride occasionally to avoid treading on a board which creaked and intruded rudely on the even tenor of his thoughts. There was a puzzled look now in his mild blue eyes; despite his effort of concentration he could not recall that forbidding frown to his face.

After awhile his pace slackened, his stride shortened and he stooped a little as if the weight of the carbine was too much for him. He no longer attempted a soldierly "about face" at the end of his beat, but scuffled a round flat footedly. His gait now resembled that of an ancient, big brown bear.

At last he halted to remove his steel rimmed glasses and wipe the lenses free of the moisture which fogged his vision. He rested his carbine against the *stoep* rails while he fumbled in the voluminous pockets of his age-green coat. He found a huge handkerchief, after a protracted search, blew his nose violently, wiped his glasses with meticulous care, then resumed his march.

He did not seem to be aware of the fact that the hand which had previously held the carbine now only carried the handkerchief. It trailed behind him on the ground, raising a little cloud of dust.

Beads of sweat formed on his forehead and ran down to lose themselves in his beard. One by one he undid the buttons which fastened the thick cloth coat so closely about him. He undid his waistcoat. His face reddened; he puffed noisily. He felt very tired. He had risen hours before his usual time. His houseboy had awakened him to tell him the news, and he had been active ever since.

He halted beside his chair, removed the cartridge belt which he placed on the floor beside the rocker, removed his coat, vest, collar and tie and hung them carefully on the back of the chair. Then he sat down and, taking off his helmet, mopped his round, bald head with the handkerchief.

"Phew!" he exclaimed. "It is too hot—and I am too old—for such child's play. I will stand guard sitting down."

He resumed his rocking, fanning himself with his helmet, slapping his head with the palm of his hand in the vain hope of discouraging the flies which his bald shininess had attracted. He saw his carbine resting against the *stoep* rail, and half rose to get it—but the effort was just too much. After all, he reasoned, it was within easy reach. He could get it when the occasion warranted.

He settled himself more comfortably in his chair and draped the handkerchief over his head, confounding the persistent attacks of the flies. Nor did he bother to rearrange it when a loose end fell down, completely masking his face.

Presently that loose end fluttered up and down, marking the deep breathing of heavy sleep. His snores were gargantuan.

After a time the handkerchief slipped off its shining stand and fell to the ground. Flies, buzzing exultantly, returned to the attack. The sun's rays pried open his heavy lidded eyes.

HE STRETCHED and looked around, a little bewildered, squinting suspiciously over the top of his glasses, as men do who suspect their sleep has been spied upon.

Then he grinned and was about to shout a friendly greeting to big Sergeant Burke and the two troopers who were tiptoeing along the road just in front of his store. But, instead of calling out, he winked to himself and pretended once again to sleep. His snores vibrated against the tin roof of the *stoep*.

"The good for nothings," he told himself with a chuckle. "They think to play a game on old Papa Haydn. But I'm too *slim* for them. I will wait and see what their little game is. Then I will awake and laugh at them. How I will laugh!"

He watched them out of the corner of his eye. They had halted now and were whispering together. They were examining his flag pole.

"I'll have to climb it," he heard one of the troopers say.

And then Papa Haydn remembered.

He rose swiftly, grunting softly at the effort, and moved with elephantine caution to where he had left his carbine. There was no mirth in his eyes; only sternness, shaded by sorrow.

One cautious step, then another. The backs of the policemen were toward him. Another step. Two more, and the carbine would be in his hands.

The loose board betrayed him. It creaked like the crack of doom in his ears. He made a frantic grab for the carbine and knocked it clattering to the floor.

"Curses!" Sergeant Burke exclaimed in a mock dramatic voice. "We are discovered!"

He and the two troopers turned around, a sheepish expression on their faces.

"We thought we'd be able to make the change and you'd be none the wiser, Papa," the sergeant continued.

And then he stared in open mouthed amazement.

Papa Haydn had retrieved his carbine and now, kneeling on the *stoep* floor, resting the barrel on the rail, was covering the three men.

"Put up your hands," he commanded sternly. "You are my prisoners."

The two troopers promptly obeyed. Papa Haydn had caught them fairly. They wondered how the joke would end. Generally the old lad handed out cigars or passed round a bottle of good whisky. Probably, today, he'd celebrate by giving both. But first he was entitled to his fun.

"Hell, Papa!" Sergeant Burke expostulated. It hurt his dignity to stand there in the sun with his hands above his head. "We weren't going to play any game on you. Honestly we weren't. Only you got the wrong flag flying up there. We planned to change it while you were asleep."

He lowered his hands as he spoke.

"Put your hands up," Papa Haydn commanded.

The sergeant laughed, but he obeyed. He, too, was ready to give Papa Haydn his pound of flesh. Papa Haydn rose to his feet and, his carbine still leveled at the three policemen, told them to come up on to the *stoep*. He kept them covered as they obeyed. His fat forefinger curled about the trigger.

"My arms are tired," the sergeant said. "What's the game?" He let his hands drop to his side.

"This is no game. Put your hands up. This is war."

"Of course it is, Papa," the sergeant agreed, and seated himself on the *stoep* rail. "I brought the volunteer roll up for you to sign. But first, hell—" he spat deliberately toward the flag pole— "we've got to pull that rag down and put up the right one."

"I'm satisfied with the one I've got," Papa Haydn said slowly.

"But damn it, Papa. Don't you know it's a German flag?"

Papa Haydn nodded.

"And the Germans and us are at war?"

Papa Haydn nodded again.

"Well, then?" the sergeant said bewilderedly.

"I am a German," said Papa Haydn and, at that moment, his fatness seemed to melt from him. He held himself erect. He thought of himself as he must have looked when he was a student fifty years ago.

"I am a German," he said again; add-

ing, his voice trembling a little, "You are my prisoners—my enemies."

The sergeant shook his head and winked at the two troopers. This was a game Papa Haydn was playing.

"And how long have you been a German and an enemy, Papa?" he asked banteringly.

"Always a German, but only since sunrise an enemy."

"You a German!" Sergeant Burke scoffed. "Don't be funny. You're as English as I am. More—by the token that I'm Irish."

"I am a German," Papa Haydn insisted stubbornly. "I had almost forgotten that was so. I have lived so long away from my country. It took a thing like this to make me remember. It took war to make me remember and make my friends my enemies. And so, now, I have no friends." There was a break in his voice but the muzzle of his carbine did not waver.

The sergeant looked inquiringly at the two troopers and one of them meaningly tapped his forehead. The sergeant nodded comprehendingly.

"It's the sun, Papa Haydn," he said, getting to his feet.

"It's not the sun," Papa Haydn shouted hoarsely. "Put up your hands, I tell you. You are my prisoners."

"Sure—and what will you do with us?" the sergeant asked soothingly. "You can't make all the men in the *dorp* your prisoners."

"It has been done. It can be done," Papa Haydn said stoutly.

He retreated a step as the sergeant advanced slowly toward him.

"Stand back," he ordered hoarsely.

The sergeant ignored him.

Papa Haydn tried to squeeze the trigger of his carbine. But hate was lacking. He could not kill—even an enemy.

Easily the sergeant disarmed him and led him inside the store.

"Wait outside," he said sternly to the two troopers, who would have followed.

The two troopers sat down on the *stoep* and drowsed. They were both rudely awakened about half an hour later by the sergeant, bellowing:

"What do you think this is? I'm a good mind to put you on the peg for sleeping in face of the enemy!"

They rose to their feet, grinning.

"What's the game, Sergeant?" they asked.

"No game," the sergeant snapped. "Bloody war. Come on!"

He strode off at a fast gait down the hill.

The two troopers tip-toed to the open door of the store. Looking in, they saw Papa Haydn seated on a sack of mealies. His arms rested on the counter, his head on his arms. His shoulders heaved with the convulsions of the dry sobs which shook his rotund frame.

The troopers ran swiftly after the sergeant.

"What's up, Paddy?" they gasped.

"Nothing," he answered morosely, not checking his stride.

They saw then that he was carrying an arsenal of weapons: an old fashioned carbine, a shotgun and two antiquated revolvers.

"Where's the war, Paddy?" one asked banteringly.

The sergeant stopped with an explosive curse.

"Hell!" he said. "You might as well know. And you can carry these lethal weapons. Papa Haydn—" he continued as he distributed his load between the two troopers—"was not playing a game with us. He *is* a German."

"What?" they excalimed incredulously. The sergeant nodded.

"It's a fact. He wasn't joking. He'd forgot all about it himself, he said, until this war started. He'd forgotten, almost, his mother's tongue. But now—hell! I thought he was going to blubber like a kid because he didn't have the guts—call it that, but I can put a better name to it—to shoot us."

"He is crying, now, Paddy."

"Ah!" The sergeant sucked fiercely at the ends of his ragged mustache. "Poor old Papa Haydn. He wanted me to ar-

rest him, and when I wouldn't do that, he said I'd got to intern him. I'm not going to do that either. Apart from my own feelings in the matter, I've no desire to be lynched by the women and kids."

"You sure he's not pulling your leg, Sergeant?" one of the troopers asked thoughtfully.

"Wish I weren't so sure," the sergeant replied morosely. "He fished some old papers out of his old tin trunk and read 'em to me. He stumbled over some of the words like a kid just learning to read. He hasn't spoken or read German for nearly twenty years, he told me. Anyway, them papers told me he was speaking the truth."

They continued on their way down the dusty road to the police camp in silence.

At the bottom of the hill the three men halted and looked back. Papa Haydn's *stoep* was still deserted. As they watched, an errant gust of wind whipped a cloud of dust about them and, passing up the hill, billowed the flag which still hung from the pole.

"We forgot to pull down that flag," one of the troopers said reflectively. "Want me to go back and tend to it, Paddy?"

"No," the sergeant growled. "Let it stay. It'll hurt nobody. Come on!

"Blast that dust," he added a moment later, furtively wiping his eyes. "It most near blinded me."

IN THE days that followed there was little outward change in the lives of the inhabitants of Williamstown.

A few of the younger, unmarried men had departed on active service in Europe. The police force was cut down to the sergeant and one trooper.

The sergeant's wrath, because he was not allowed to go on active service, was placated somewhat by official instructions to form a Home Guard. He bullied the men into showing up for drill twice a week. And he posted a guard at the bridge over the river.

There were always volunteers for that job. The bridge was about twelve miles from the *dorp* and a pleasant, sheltered place to loaf through the heat of the day—at the government's expense.

The bridge guard spent most of their time prospecting, or shooting crocodiles—often wandering a great distance from their charge. As Peter Langley explained:

"What harm's going to come to the bridge? There ain't no Germans within three or four hundred miles. An' if there was, an' they did blow it up, what the hell would it matter? It ain't on the road to anywhere but the *dorp*. The bridge ain't of no military value. We're way out of the zone of operations."

But apart from the posting of the bridge guard and the drills, the people of Williamstown carried on, outwardly at least, in the normal manner. And the flag still floated in front of Papa Haydn's store.

The attitude of the people of Williamstown toward him puzzled Papa Haydn. When he insisted he was an enemy and a danger, therefore, to the security of their lives and homes, they only smiled sympathetically at him and retailed, properly edited for his benefit, the war news which came their way.

Papa Haydn felt it all very bewildering. That suddenly awakened loyalty to his mother country burned strongly with him. He tried to behave like an enemy; he tried to hate his country's foes. But these people were his friends. He had lived with them for many years, sharing the hardships of frontier life; laughing with them; comforting them at times of sorrow. He was godfather to half the children in the *dorp*. He'd been the guest of honor at every marriage; a sincere mourner at every funeral. He was Papa Haydn to them all—men, women and children. He could not hate them.

Tugged this way and that by conflicting emotions, he was in a constant state of mental conflict; it was a conflict which aged him. It stamped out his smile wrinkles.

At times when his patriotic loyalty seemed to be transcendant, the scales would be suddenly turned by memories of

old friendships and the refusal of the town folk to alter their regard for him. It might have been kinder to him if they had taken him at his word and sent him away, under escort, to the large internment camp down south.

At times, when he forgot the war and the barrier which had been artifically created between himself and the town folk, when he was happiest in the enjoyment of old friendships, a surge of loyalty to country would sweep over him and he would break rudely away from the gathering to retire to his store, there to brood upon his hapless situation.

As the weary days passed Papa Haydn, normally the most sociable of men, avoided his friends and rarely left his store.

But he could not keep people from coming to him. Day after day his store was filled with customers, many of whom, he suspected, toiled up the dusty road, braving the heat of the sun, solely in order to cheer him out of his despondency.

He tried to frown at children; tried to screw his face up into forbidding grimaces. But no child was ever intimidated or neglected to fumble through Papa Haydn's coat pockets in search of sweets. Their search was never in vain. Their cries of grateful delight would bring back, for a fleeting moment, smiles to Papa Haydn's face.

And then one day Rosie Jacobs called her son—he was prospecting for sweets—away from Papa Haydn. Scolding volubly, she knocked the candy he had in his grubby little hand to the ground.

When Papa Haydn ventured a mild protest, the irate woman turned on him.

"You Hun, you!" she cried. "Don't you let me catch you giving my Abie any more sweets. You baby killer!"

And she dragged her howling offspring down the street.

Papa Haydn gazed sadly after them until a mistiness fogged his vision which no amount of lens polishing would vanquish. He looked down at the candy and ground it slowly into the dust.

"She thought I would poison her boy," he muttered, and walked, head bent, dejectedly back to his store.

He tried to find some comfort in telling himself that at last he was being treated like an enemy. But it was a bitter comfort.

REACHING his store, he went in, locking and bolting the door behind him. For a little while he busied himself checking his goods—there was very little merchandise left on his shelves; an expected consignment was long overdue. There were rumors that it had been captured by his people. Under the counter he found a box of dynamite. Fuses and caps were in another box close by. He had almost forgotten he had such dangerous stuff and debated the best way to dispose of it; hiding it, finally, at the bottom of a long since dried up well covered by the floor boards of the store.

That done he pulled down the blinds, shutting out the red rays of the setting sun and went into his living room.

Spread out on the large deal table were maps showing the battle fronts of the war. Colored pins showed the disposition of the conflicting forces. He sat down and tried to concentrate on the maps—but all he saw was a grubby little boy being snatched away from him and a sticky mess of sweets, melted by the sun, discarded in the dusty street.

Heavy footsteps sounded on the wooden floor of the *stoep*. Voices shouted, clamoring for admission. Many of his friends had come up, wanting to make amends for Rosie's cruelty.

But he ignored their knocking; their shouted explanations met with no response. All Papa Haydn heard was a voice saying over and over again—

"Baby killer—baby killer!"

Tears rolled unheeded down his cheeks. He sat thus for a long time after darkness entered the room, wandering in an even greater darkness of cold despair.

At last, with a heavy sigh, he rose and, with fumbling fingers, lighted a lamp which he placed so that its rays fell on a

map of the campaign which the Boer Commander of the British forces in East Africa was waging against Von Letlow.

They were fighting over country Papa Haydn had known well in his prospecting days, before he had helped to found Williamstown; before he had settled down to the comparatively sedentary life of a store keeper.

He bent low over the map, his stumpy forefinger locating water holes in the desert lands; fords over seemingly unfordable rivers and native *kraals* where once his name had been a word to conjure with. He nodded thoughtfully.

"I can be of some use," he decided. "I know the country and I know the natives. I should have gone sooner."

More cheerfully he turned to another map, planning a route to follow.

He was actually whistling when, a little while later, he busied himself getting together provisions for a trek. He forgot the load of years he had to carry; forgot that young men, strong men, had been beaten by the trip he meant to make. He had done it once, he told himself, and he could do it again. Even the fact that he had no weapons failed to distract him from his purpose.

"I'll be better without them," he concluded. "I'll have enough to carry without burdening myself with a gun. My waistline—" he chuckled softly; the sergeant sometimes called him, jestingly, "old balloon belly"— "is a bit bigger than it was when I last made that trip. And, anyhow, there's no hostile niggers to bother about. And no game to shoot."

He toyed with the idea of making the trip in his Scotch cart. But he quickly decided against it. He knew that by the end of the first day he would have to continue his journey on foot, leaving the mules to their own devices in a barren, waterless tract of country. And he couldn't do that. Besides, Sergeant Burke would be able to follow the *spoor* of the cart and bring him back.

No—he'd have to make the journey on foot. The mule had not been foaled that could carry his weight.

His preparations complete he ate an enormous meal. By the time his appetite was sated it was nearly nine o'clock, and he felt ready for bed. He carried the lamp into his bedroom and had half unlaced one shoe, yawning and gaping, before he remembered the thing he meant to do.

Hastily he laced up his shoe again, freshened himself by plunging his head in a pail of water and toweling himself vigorously. Then he adjusted the pack he had made up and blew out the light.

For a little time he stood motionless, filling the little room with the sounds of his deep breathing. In the darkness Papa Haydn was bidding goodby to all his treasures, all his tokens of friendships.

A little later he stumbled blindly out of the store, down the *stoep* steps, down the hill past the police camp, through the *dorp* to the open veld beyond.

Papa Haydn was marching to join his own people.

Until the light of the false dawn whitened the eastern horizon, Papa Haydn trekked doggedly through the darkness, fighting against the desire to sleep. His shoulders ached from the weight of his pack; his feet felt as if they would burst through their leather covering. Thorn bush scored his face and hands and tore gaping holes in his coat and trousers. The heavy mist which saturated his clothes sent a chill to the marrow of his bones. He had forgotten how cold an African night on the open veld can be. Toward early morning a strong wind had blown, forcing him to bend to its fury, lashing his face with stinging grains of driven sand. It was a cold wind, born on the snow crowned heights of Kilimanjaro.

Papa Haydn had started off at a two mile an hour gait. He had reckoned to keep that pace up until daybreak—he had made a time table of the trip. So many hours—so many miles traveled. A few hours for sleep, then on again.

He had, he thought, been overconservative; but with the wisdom of an old campaigner had thought it best to err that way. It never occurred to him that

he would not be able to keep to his time table. And that he had to do if he was to make the trip at all. His provisions would only last just so long; the water holes were far apart . . .

Two miles an hour—a slow pace. But Papa Haydn had forgotten his years, forgotten his weight. The sandy soil dragged him down; long disused muscles could not respond to the tax he put on them. Frequently tripped by some unseen obstacle, he fell heavily to the ground—and he did not rise immediately but lay prostrate, panting, nauseated.

He had been trekking nearly eight hours when he realized that he could go on no longer; eight hours of concentrated torture—and the *dorp* was barely eight miles behind him.

He did not know that. He thought that he had kept to his time table, that he was halfway to the first water hole, a quarter of his journey completed. A few hours sleep . . .

He rolled himself in his blanket in the lee of a pile of rocks.

"I wish I'd left a note for Paddy Burke," he muttered. "He'll worry about me."

The next moment, before the false dawn had faded, he was fast asleep.

IT WAS high noon when he woke. He stared for a moment about him in bewilderment. Then remembrance came to him, and an angry realization that he had considerably overslept the time he had planned.

He threw the blanket from him and rose to his feet, groaning at the aching pains which racked him.

He leaned back against a rock. Its scorching heat seared him. He swallowed a little water from his canteen; it was lukewarm and failed to satisfy his thirst. He hastily munched a few sandwiches, wrapped up the remainder and put them in his coat pocket.

He was ready then to resume his trek but hesitated, uncertain of his bearings. He climbed on to the top of a flat rock. The radius of his vision was always very short and now the heat waves distorted everything. But he apparently saw something that reassured him for he clambered down from the rock and set off at a slow jog trot; he was trying to make up for the hours wasted in sleep.

But he soon slowed down to a shuffling walk.

The heat rose from the ground like blasts from an open furnace. The yellow sun seemed to expand until it filled the sky; its heat beat down upon Papa Haydn. He felt that he was being grilled between two fires. The ground heaved beneath his feet. He reeled like a drunken man. He fumbled at his belt for his water bottle, telling himself he would only have one little sip. The bottle was not there. He stopped and felt in his pockets, his motions jerky and panic governed.

Then the knowledge struck him like a heavy blow; he remembered that he had left it behind at the rocks. He had left his blankets there, too. They did not matter—but water! He could not go on without water.

He turned slowly about. He had to go back to the rocks. But he could not see them; and then he forgot what he had halted for and trekked on.

He talked aloud to himself for a time until, thinking he had a companion, he stopped to listen. He laughed. It was very funny. Of course he was alone! He was Papa Haydn—but no; Papa Haydn was that other one. He was *Herr* Haydn, marching across the desert to join his people. Marching to give them—his thoughts became tangled in a maze of memories. Sweets! Poisoned sweets to Rosie Jacobs' brat! . .

His black coat—white dust covered it—felt as if it were lined with lead—with white hot lead. It cut into his armpits. He took it off, folded it with meticulous care and carried it over his arm. Presently it slid to the ground, but he did not pick it up. He felt that he could not stop. No matter what happened, he could never stop. He was sure of that. He wished that he could be as sure of the road he ought to take—to the right or the

left. Decisions were continually being forced upon him.

And yet there was a knowledge deep down inside him that there was only one way across the desert—only one way for him to go to his people.

His people?

That started another chain of thoughts; thoughts which the heat melted into an illogical sequence.

He kept to his feet, now stumbling up the side of a sand dune, now forcing his way through patches of thorn scrub. Mirages tortured him with visions of cool fountains. He crawled steathily toward one on hands and knees; he looked like some uncouth beast stalking its prey. He tried to stop his breathing, fearing that the glistening pool of water to which he headed would take alarm and vanish.

A measure of sanity returning to him, he rose to his feet and turned his back on the mirage. He tried to whistle a march but though he puffed valiantly through bleeding lips he made no sound, though his inner ear heard the stirring notes of a military band. He marched for a time, head erect, arms swinging. But not for long.

Soon his pace was no more than a crawl; his knees bent, his head drooped forward. He could scarcely lift his feet. After a time he didn't try, but shuffled them along, creating a cloud of fine white dust which, clinging to his sweat stained face, gave him a death-like pallor. He tore his collar from his neck, ripped his shirt and under vest to pieces. Shreds of his clothing fluttered on thorn bushes.

After a time he felt strangely light; he sang hoarsely. He felt that his body could soar upward and float across the desert to his destination.

"I'm a balloon," he muttered. "They laughed at me because I was fat. They didn't know. I'm a balloon!"

He tried to rise above the desert. But something held him. He felt like a balloon tugging at its mooring ropes. He wondered what held him. Suddenly he understood. It was his shoes. Once they were taken off . . .

He looked down at them. Wondering that they should be at such an incredible distance below. All the world whirled past him. He felt that he was standing at the edge of a precipice looking down at his feet at the bottom of a dark ravine. He stooped forward, his hand groping for a boot lace.

The effort was too much for him, the distance too great. He lost his balance and fell, headfirst, into the ravine.

IT WAS there that the search party led by Sergeant Burke found him just as the sun set. For the past hour they had been following his *spoor*, understanding its zig-zag course; understanding, as they thought, the meaning of the swing round back to Williamstown.

"You see," the sergeant said, "he thought better of it. He was on his way home."

He did not know that Papa Haydn's fevered dreams were speeding him swiftly, effortlessly over the desert.

They carried the old man tenderly back to his store. There the women folk took charge and the fight to save Papa Haydn's life commenced.

His recovery was slow; the fever weakened him and it seemed at times as if he had not the will to live. The effort he had made to join his people had sapped his physical vitality. The knowledge that he had failed oppressed him. He wanted to die.

But the women would not let him go. Gradually they won the fight they were waging. The laughter of their children helped.

And at last the doctor was able to pronounce Papa Haydn well on the way to recovery. The bell of the mission church rang that day. The band gave a concert outside the store.

Laughter once again came into Papa Haydn's eyes. Every day some of his friends visited him and they gossiped of old times, blueing the air with the smoke of their pipes. He was happiest when he and Sergeant Burke were alone together

and followed on a dogeared map the fortunes of the gallant Von Letlow.

Hardly a day passed that the sergeant was not able to recount some *coup* of Von Letlow's; some audacious raid; some Robin Hood-like stratagem. The man and his force seemed ubiquitous. Again and again it seemed sure that the superior British forces had him in a trap, but when the trap closed it was only to find that Von Letlow had escaped once again and word would come of him invading British territory miles distant from where he was supposed to be.

"He's as cunning as a fox, as brave as a lion, Papa," Sergeant Burke said. "But Jan Smuts is on his trail now. Jan is a *slim* fox, too. Jan Smuts 'll get him."

Papa Haydn agreed.

"I suppose it's inevitable," he said. "He's put up a splendid fight against overwhelming odds. No matter how he finishes, there'll be no disgrace."

"Disgrace! Hell, no, Papa. Jan Smuts 'll decorate him." The sergeant continued, answering Papa Haydn's look of puzzled inquiry, "It's the day's titbit, Papa. The Kaiser sent out a decoration for Von Letlow. Naturally it was intercepted and forwarded to Jan Smuts. So Jan writes a polite letter to Von Letlow and invites him to come and get his decoration.

"And Von Letlow writes a polite letter, too. 'I'd be charmed,' he said, 'to accept your kind invitation were it not for the fact that I have urgent engagements elsewhere.' And the day Jan Smuts got that letter he got dispatches telling him that Von Letlow had blown up a few miles of railway and a bridge or two.

"And they say," the sergeant concluded, "that Jan Smuts keeps that decoration in his pocket until he can give it to Von Letlow himself."

The two men were silent for a little while. Then Papa Haydn said tentatively:

"I'm nearly fit again now, Paddy. I walked round the room this morning without once feeling giddy. Tomorrow I'm going to sit out on the *stoep*."

"That's good news, Papa," the sergeant said heartily.

"And," Papa Haydn said slowly, "I haven't given you my parole."

The sergeant swore under his breath.

"But you will, Papa?"

"I won't—never!"

"But look here," the sergeant expostulated. "What's the good of you talking like this? We can't have you sneaking off like you did last time. You've got to give me your parole."

"I won't," Papa Haydn said firmly.

The sergeant hesitated a moment. He lighted a cigaret, masking the smile on his face behind his cupped hands. Then he rose to his feet and said sternly:

"Very well, Herr Haydn. You will consider yourself interned as a dangerous enemy national."

He left the room quickly, chuckling to himself as he thought of the smile of happy content which had spread slowly over Papa Haydn's face.

THE DAYS passed. Papa Haydn, fully recovered, found time hanging heavily on his hands.

There was nothing for him to do. There seemed nothing he wanted to do.

Hour after hour he sat in the rocking chair on his *stoep*, gazing dreamily at the flag or telling stories of the old pioneer days to the youthful day guards who were supposed to do sentry duty about the store.

Several times Papa Haydn tried to escape. But he never got far before they caught him, and his relief was even greater than that of his captors. He realized at last that his days for trekking across barren lands were over.

"You're not playing fair with us, Papa Haydn," the sergeant said. "What's the good of trying to escape? You'll only lose yourself and die in the barren lands. 'Tisn't as if you could ever hope to find Von Letlow's crowd. They're on the move all the time . . . No; you stay here and don't go tearing the hearts out of us by going and losing yourself again."

"I won't," Papa Haydn promised meekly.

He allowed himself more latitude after that.

Two or three times a week he'd have two quiet mules harnessed to a Scotch cart and drive out to the bridge. And if he took the guard presents of tobacco he answered the accusations of patriotic loyalty that he was spying out the land and perfecting a scheme to blow up the bridge. It would be absurdly easy. The guards never interfered with him when he wandered aimlessly about the bridge, estimating the best place to put a charge of dynamite. Why should they? He was Papa Haydn. Besides, what would be the good of blowing up the bridge, anyway?

Several times Papa actually placed a charge in position; planted the charge and attached a time fuse. But each time he had taken the charge home with him. He could not bring himself to set it off.

Realizing that in all probability the guards—his old friends—would be blown up with the bridge, how could he?

Nearly always on these excursions he made a detour to an isolated homestead and had noonday skoff there. John Martin, the homesteader, was on active service, but the womenfolk—his wife and daughter—carried on against his return. They were special favorites of Papa Haydn's. Mary, the girl, was named after his wife who had died long ago.

On one of these visits he noticed a lot of strange natives about the place. Savage, half starved, brutal looking Shenzies.

They had responded sullenly to his questions; lying, he was sure of that. Several carried long bladed *assegais*, and one had a rifle. He ordered the man to surrender his weapon and was answered by a string of insults. He threatened them with punishment, but he was helpless against their numbers. He was unarmed and they only laughed mockingly at his stuttering anger. They laughed even louder when he lashed at them with his driving whip. But when he ponderously commenced to climb down from the Scotch cart they disappeared into the tall elephant grass. There were limits, they knew, beyond which it was unwise to bait a white man.

The Martins, when he spoke of his encounter with the Shenzies, told him that they were fugitives from the battle zone.

"They don't intend to be impertinent, Papa Haydn," Mary Martin said. "They're wild, of course, but there's no harm in them. They're helping our natives to get in the crops."

Both Mrs. Martin and her daughter laughed at his suggestion that they come into the *dorp* or that he should stay to protect them.

"We can protect ourselves, Papa Haydn," Mary said. "And there's no danger, really."

Papa Haydn shook his head doubtfully.

"I shall tell Sergeant Burke all about it," he said as he prepared to return to the *dorp*. "He'll make you listen to reason. He's a most masterful man." He shook his finger at Mary, laughing at her blushes.

But he had no opportunity to tell any one.

When he arrived at the *dorp* he found that the place had become an armed camp during his absence. The general and his staff, escorted by a troop of mounted infantry, had arrived. The main army would be there tomorrow.

That much he learned from a youngster who had jumped into the Scotch cart for a free ride with Papa Haydn.

He talked excitedly of the soldiers, wondering at the old man's air of gloom and absent minded replies. Deciding, finally, that it would be more fun to join the crowd of boys who were watching the troopers groom their horses, he clambered out of the cart again, and Papa Haydn felt utterly alone.

HE HALTED his mules finally outside his store, and stared in bewilderment at the armed, uniformed men who were posted all about the place.

A British flag floated from the flag pole.

He climbed heavily down from the Scotch cart and, head bent, made his way with dragging footsteps to the *stoep* steps. A sentry confronted him, barring the way with fixed bayonet.

"You can't go in there, old 'un," he said. "The general's there,"

Papa Haydn tried to push aside the bayonet with his hand.

"It is my home," he said slowly and took a step forward. The bayonet pressed hard against his belly.

"Do you want your guts ripped out?" the soldier shouted. "On your way, now."

He raised his voice in a sharp final warning as Papa Haydn tried to evade him.

"What is it, sentry?"

At the curt question the soldier wheeled and sprang to attention.

"This man, sir," he said to the bearded, kindly faced general who had just come out on to the *stoep*, "says he lives here an' tried to get past me, sir."

"Ah!" The bearded man smiled gravely at Papa Haydn. "I've heard of you, sir. All right, sentry, let him pass."

"Very good, sir." The soldier saluted and turned to Papa Haydn again. "On your way, old 'un," he said stepping aside so that Papa Haydn could pass. He added in a fierce whisper, "Lucky for you our Jan came out when he did. You'd be dead by now, else."

Papa Haydn seemed not to hear him; seemed to have suddenly aged.

The general saluted him as he mounted the steps.

Papa Haydn looked at him, heavy eyed.

"I regret," the general said, "that until tomorrow I must trouble you to extend to me and my staff the hospitality of your house."

Papa Haydn sat down in his chair and rocked back and forth. He tried not to see the flag which floated from the pole. He did not consciously hear what the short, stout, uniformed man was saying.

Something, he gathered about the affection of the people of Williamstown for him, of the important part he had played in the development of the *dorp*, of his patriotic loyalty.

"Your flag—" the general laughed softly—"shall fly again after our departure. And you will, I hope," he concluded, "honor myself and my staff by dining with us tonight."

A young *aide-de-camp*—the general looked shabby beside his polished glitter—came to the door and said curtly, with just the right suggestion of deference—

"We are ready for you now, sir."

The general hesitated a moment, tugging thoughtfully at his pointed beard as he looked down at Papa Haydn. Then he sighed softly and re-entered the store.

For a long hour Papa Haydn sat in his rocker, staring straight before him, unheedful of the constant stream of messengers, deaf to their good humored banter and overtures of friendship.

A window was suddenly thrown open, letting fresh air into the room where the general was in serious conference. The hum of voices assailed Papa Haydn like the sting of angry hornets.

He half rose, conscious of a qualm of compunction—he was too big a man to be guilty of the petty crime of eavesdropping—intending to drag his chair to the other end of the *stoep*. Then he remembered that the men in that room were his enemies and were discussing plans to defeat his people.

Eavesdropping under such conditions became a patriotic virtue. He dropped back again in his chair, yawned, stretched himself.

A few minutes later he feigned sleep. Not that he would have deceived the most casual observer. Papa Haydn's attitude was too tense for sleep. But no one bothered about him. Why bother about a fat old man asleep in the sun?

He found it hard to follow the mumble of voices. Military terms explaining a military situation meant nothing to him. But this, at least, he understood:

The British forces had at last got Von Letlow in a trap. If he tried to head north, a British force barred his way. East, the same fate awaited him. West was a waterless desert, with a Belgian force waiting beyond. South—the main

British force was marching to close that avenue of escape.

"If we can reach that point by sunset tomorrow," the stocky general said, "we've got him."

There had been confident laughter at that.

"We can be there by noon, sir," Papa Haydn heard the young aide say. "We're making a forced night march. We'll be at the bridge by midnight. Halt there till daybreak. On trek at 6 A.M. We'll be there in time, sir."

After that the men busied themselves with discussions of details and Papa Haydn relaxed. He had heard enough. It remained for him to act—but not too precipitately. He must clarify his plans. His departure must be craftily arranged. He could not afford to arouse suspicion.

He sat motionless for a while, his eyes closed, snoring loudly.

His awakening was realistic, apparently brought about by the volume of his snores. He glared mildly at the sentry who laughed at him, and rose to his feet, stretching himself.

His mules were still harnessed to the Scotch cart and he reproached himself for not having outspanned them. It was unlike him to be thoughtless of his animals' welfare.

"Where you goin', old 'un?" a sentry asked idly as Papa Haydn waddled down the *stoep* steps to the cart.

"I've just remembered a message I forgot to give—" he mumbled uncertainly; he was a poor liar—"and it's urgent."

He drove slowly down the hill.

"The old bloke's as mad as a coot," the sentry concluded. "Got an urgent message to give, has he? Looks more to me like as if he was going to a funeral."

But for the excitement attendant upon the presence of the general and his staff, Papa Haydn would never have managed to leave the *dorp*, unchallenged. Apparently no one saw him and his absence was not discovered until the general's aide looked for him in order to tell him that dinner was served.

By that time the sun had set.

"We'll pick him up in the morning," the general assured several of the town folk who were dining with him; and Papa Haydn was forgotten in the drinking of toasts.

THE DARKNESS did not halt Papa Haydn; he was glad of it. It hid him from possible pursuit and, by shutting off from his vision the material things, gave him an opportunity to sort out the conflicting emotions which assailed him.

He sat hunched up on the driver's seat, the reins hanging loosely in his hands, trusting to the sagacity of the mules to keep them to the dirt road which led from the *dorp* to the bridge.

The bridge! That was his goal. Tonight he would do the thing he had so often planned. He had no doubt of success. Even if the guards accosted him, it would be very easy to deal with them. They were his friends. There'd be no suspicions in their minds.

He knew exactly where he meant to place the charge of dynamite. The time fuses would have to be very short, though; shorter than he had planned for a daytime blowing up of the bridge. Some one might see the glowing spark and if the fuse were too long— Yes; very short fuses.

So short that he might not escape in time. So short that he would be blown up with the bridge and the guards . . .

That thought roused the old doubts once again. Not because of himself. He was of no importance. His own life was such a small thing to give for his country. Death had no terror for him. But his friends' lives—was he justified in sacrificing them?

He decided he was after a long, agonizing consideration.

By blowing up the bridge he would delay the onward march of the main British force so that they would not be at their rendezvous at the appointed time. The trap could not be sprung and Von Letlow would escape once again.

He put his own life and the lives of a

few friends in the balance against that fact. They did not tilt the scale.

The mules, their eyes accustomed now to the darkness, broke into a slow trot. He hauled them savagely to a walk. He could not hasten to destroy his friends.

Then, for a little while, he sang a song of his childhood; he was warmed by an inner fire of patriotic fervor; by a martyr's exultation.

But that soon passed; a deep, despondent gloom settled about him.

He relived, in his memory, the years that had passed. He thought of the things he had done, of the friends he had made. Staunch, loyal friends. He had been proud of his nickname; it was one of the first things the babies of Williamstown had been taught to say.

"Papa Haydn!"

And Papa Haydn was going to blow up their fathers, their husbands, their lovers. No; truly, that was no cause for exultation. But he did not waver from his purpose. What he had set out to do, he would do. The black doubts persisted. He needed action to put them to flight.

"I will get ready!" he told himself.

He hung the reins over the back of the seat and, reaching down, fumbled in the box at his feet. It contained, covered by a blanket and packed in sawdust, sticks of dynamite. Fuses were attached to them and tied together. Carefully, fully aware of the risky stuff he was handling, he separated them and reduced the lengths of fuse.

It was an operation which took some time. The concentration, his stooping posture, made him giddy. His head ached and he rested his forehead against the side of the cart, finding its smooth coolness comforting. He remained like this for some time, gazing dreamily at the star strewn sky.

HE AROUSED himself with a start, conscious suddenly that the mules had halted. He broke out in a cold sweat, fearing that the mules had got off the road and were lost on the veld; or that they had stopped at the behest of some unseen enemy. He peered blindly about him—then understood.

They had halted at a fork in the road. The left arm led on to the bridge; the right to the homestead of the Martins. The mules only awaited his guidance.

He too halted, unable to make a decision. He wanted to say goodby to the Martins. He told himself he would only stay a little while. Maybe he would not go in at all, but just peer at them through the window. He would do that, he thought. And leave a note telling them what he was going to do, and why.

They would understand. They were such dear friends.

He felt in his pocket and extracted a fat cigar. He rarely smoked but tonight was an occasion. He lighted it and puffed meditatively. Finally he took up the reins, ready to turn the mules along the right fork.

But he still hesitated. He knew that if he went to the Martins he could not depart without speaking to them.

No; best not to subject himself to so severe a trial.

"When," he told himself, "a choice lies between duty and desire—there is no choice." And he turned the mules' heads to the left hand fork.

As he did so wild yells suddenly echoed across the veld. They continued, punctuated at intervals by rifle shots. There was something elemental, something of the beastliness of Africa in those yells, that distance failed to soften.

They acted on Papa Haydn like a cold shower, spurring him to instant action. He no longer hesitated but whipped the mules and guided their maddened gallop along the trail leading to the Martins.

He was no longer torn by conflicting emotions. He had lived long in Africa; he had survived three bloody rebellions. He knew what those yells meant. The natives were on the war path. The Shenzies were attacking the Martins. He cursed grimly as he pictured the fate of those two gentle women at the hands of blood lustful natives.

He chewed savagely on the end of his cigar; its glowing tip illuminated his face, and the grim courage of the man showed through his placid exterior, transforming his kindly face into that of a fighter.

The Scotch cart tilted like a ship in a heavy sea. Crudely sprung, it bounced and jolted Papa Haydn on the seat and he was obliged to hold on with both hands. The yelling sounded nearer; a bright glow ahead told him that the outbuilding had been fired.

He thought he could see black forms dancing about, silhouetted against the flames.

He nodded grimly. That meant the women were safe. The natives hadn't captured the homestead yet. And the flames would be seen at the *dorp* and by the bridge guard. But before they could arrive it would be too late.

The pace of the mules slackened; their driver was no longer urging them on. His hands were busy with the dynamite. He puffed vigorously at his cigar; it glowed brighter. He applied it to a fuse attached to one of the sticks of dynamite and watched it burn steadily down.

A loud burst of yelling close at hand told him that the natives were waiting for him.

He looked up. He saw a confused mob of them milling about directly in his path. They waved spears and torches. They shouted threats.

The mules slowed down to a walk, hesitated—then stopped. The fuse was burning down close to the danger point. Papa Haydn applied the end of his cigar to fuses attached to other sticks.

There was a slamming report. Something struck him a heavy blow in the stomach, winding him. He lurched forward and almost fell from the seat. He gasped, but that sense of breathlessness continued. A sharp pain bit into his vitals.

The next moment the natives, yelling exultantly, rushed to attack him; a massed, undisciplined horde.

With an effort Papa Hadyn rose to his feet, holding on to the side of the cart with his left hand, and threw the stick he held into the path of the onrushing natives.

A second and the third quickly followed.

Almost immediately the darkness was split by three flashes of light which paled that of the burning barn; white flashes streaked with vivid yellows and crimson.

The reports which followed deafened him; violent gusts of wind rocked the Scotch cart. The mules, now mad with terror, swung sharply round, tipping over the cart, pitching Papa Haydn out on to his head, and galloped swiftly away into the darkness.

A deep roaring, like waves dashing on a rocky shore filled Papa Haydn's ears. He felt that he was being battered about among breakers. Then a giant comber seemed to pick him up and carry him over the rocks into the security of a peaceful harbor . . .

A RESCUE party from the *dorp*, headed by the sergeant, found him lying where he had fallen, surrounded by a number of dead and wounded natives; the rest had flown in terror, all thought of loot and rapine forgotten. They picked him up and carried him tenderly into the house and entrusted him to the care of the two women.

But he knew nothing of this. Even when he opened his eyes there was no gleam of understanding in them when Mary Martin spoke to him, thanking him. She knew the fate from which he had saved her.

All through the night he stared blankly at the ceiling; his lips moved ceaselessly, but no sound came from them.

Toward daybreak a half consciousness returned to him and he talked in a dull monotone. The two emotions which had torn him seemed to materialize and discuss his behavior: one accusing, the other commending.

And to the sad eyed listeners came an understanding at last of all that Papa Haydn had undergone.

At sunrise, he himself seemed to take charge of the discussion, summing up the points made. Finally, like a judge passing sentence of death, he said:

"I have failed. I have betrayed my country."

He repeated that over and over again, tears rolling down his face. Nothing they could do comforted him. In vain they assured him that he'd done all that a soldier could do; that even if he had carried out his purpose the advance would not have been halted for the river was at its lowest and the crossing easy. In vain they told him that he had played a man's part, had saved two women from a horrible death.

He did not see them; he did not hear them. He had passed sentence on himself and would not rescind it. His hands picked aimlessly at the bed covers; his eyes closed. But his voice continued to iterate with awful monotony:

"I have failed. I have failed."

The general and his staff entered.

A messenger had met him as he was on his way to supervise the advance of his men. Hearing the story of what had happened he had turned aside to pay homage to a brave man.

A medical officer examined Papa Haydn and shook his head in answer to the general's look of inquiry. The general turned to Sergeant Burke.

"What is he saying, Sergeant? Why does he think he's failed?"

The sergeant explained briefly.

"Ah! But that's no way for a hero to die—thinking he's failed."

The men held a whispered consultation; a rehearsal of things to be done and things to be said.

Doors opened and closed. The room vibrated to the tread of armed men and echoed to shouted, guttural commands.

The clash of rifle butts on the wooden floor, the sharp, incisive rattle of bayonets being fixed, and the jingle of accoutrement penetrated through the clouds of death which hovered about Papa Haydn.

He tried to rouse himself.

Another sharp command was followed by regularly spaced thuds as the men who had filed into the room presented arms.

Papa Haydn opened his eyes. Feebly he took off his glasses and tried to wipe the lenses.

The effort seemed too much for him. The glasses fell from his hands; his eyelids fluttered to a close. He felt himself sinking into a bottomless sea. He heard a voice calling him from some vast distance.

"Herr Haydn," it said. "Herr Haydn."

He struggled back—up to the surface. The voice sounded like a clarion call.

"Herr Haydn! *Achtung!*"

His legs stiffened under the covers; his hands dropped rigidly to his sides. He opened his eyes, but saw only the rainbow flecked shafts of sunlight reflected from bayonet tips.

"Herr Haydn." The voice sounded very near, just beside him. He held on to it with his mind. It would, he felt, save him from sinking again into the blackness of that terrible sea. The voice continued in the language of his boyhood:

"Herr Haydn! At the command of his Most Imperial Majesty, Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany, I decorate you with the Iron Cross. This is awarded you in recognition of your unwavering loyalty to your country and unflinching courage in the face of the enemy."

A smile spread slowly over Papa Haydn's face as he felt gentle hands pinning something on to his shirt.

His right hand was raised to a salute, then fell across his eyes—like a child shielding his eyes from too bright a light. The fingers of his left hand fumbled with the decoration, caressing the ribbon; tracing the outline of the cross.

He felt strangely light. He felt that he was being wafted upward. His lips parted in a contented sigh.

And then, quite suddenly, he was conscious of nothing more.

BEYOND DEVIL'S

A Novelette of the Lost Souls who Pay the Price of the Dry Guillotine

CHAPTER I

THE SENTENCE

IN A STUFFY courtroom at the Assizes of the Seine the presiding magistrate made a notation on a tablet and passed it in turn to his associates on each side of him. One after the other they nodded affirmatively, and then an attendant prodded the American prisoner gently. He was to stand up and hear his sentence.

"After a fair and impartial trial," the spokesman-judge declared, "you have been found guilty of murder. In view of the element of provocation, and taking into consideration your honorable war record, it is not the purpose of this court to inflict the death penalty. Instead, and in punishment for a brutal crime which cost a human life, you are hereby sentenced to a life term of penal servitude at hard labor in Guiana."

"*Travaux forcés à perpétuité à Guyane!*"

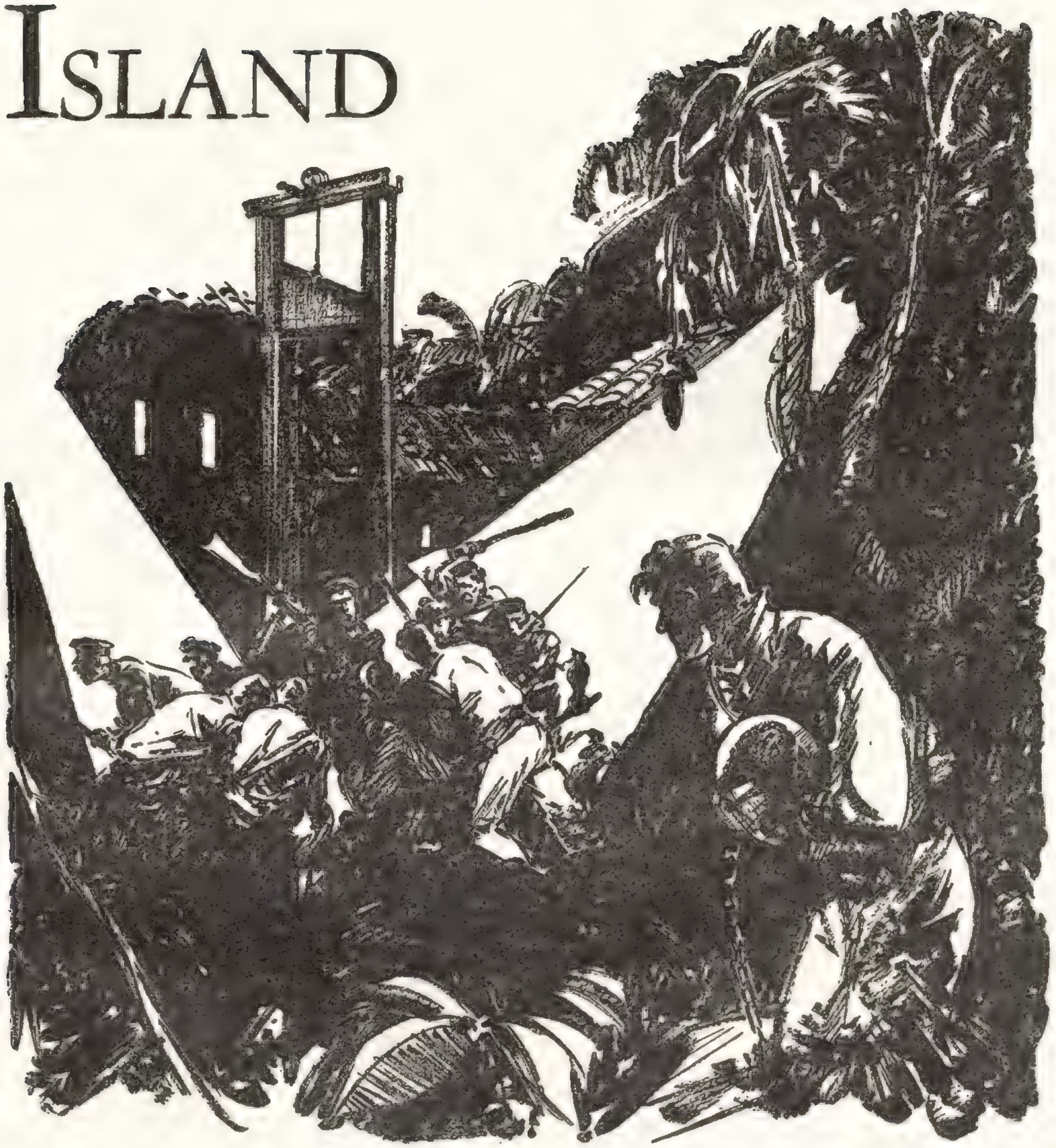
To the innocent prisoner each syllable was a stab. At the monstrous word *forever*, murmuring was heard in the courtroom. There was a shuffling of feet as the room slowly emptied, and then came the touch of steel at the wrist of the prisoner. He was led away.

In the gloomy courtyard below, a van destined for La Santé stood purring at the curb, the smoke from its exhaust blending with the river mist which rose from the Seine and hid the sun.

All Paris was gray and chill this October day. It had been far different in July, when—

Lieutenant Cornelius Storm, U. S. A, held over in France and attached for three weary years to the Graves Registration Bureau, turned from the Embassy, his accepted resignation in his pocket, and headed for his small hotel on the age soaked Left Bank.

ISLAND



By STEPHEN ALLEN REYNOLDS

No stranger to Paris was he. On fleeting permits wheedled from a crusty chief he had investigated the Grands Boulevards from the Madeleine to Porte Saint-Denis. He knew therefore where money would go the farthest and, pending the receipt of the first pay check from the firm of American importers who had taken him on in the dual capacity of translator and accountant, was resolved to go slow in the matter of expenditures.

One exception, however, was the new suit of Harris tweed promised to him late that afternoon by the smartest English tailor in Paris. He had gone the limit on this item, and now, eager to doff his Sam Browne belt and khaki and don the new outfit, Storm climbed aboard a bus.

Not far from the Place St. Michel, on the edge of the Latin Quarter, where Cornelius left the bus, the Rue St. Severin bore off to the left; and a few paces distant

from the noisy Boulevard the grimy brick façade of the Hôtel Suisse loomed above a narrow and cobbled thoroughfare. The hotel, like many another in the vicinage, boasted neither bar nor restaurant, and was an establishment where few questions were asked of those who rented its furnished rooms.

The *concierge*, an ample woman enveloped in a soiled apron and an alcoholic aura, smiled a welcome as Cornelius passed, and volunteered:

"There is a package at your door, monsieur. It just arrived."

Thanking her, Cornelius climbed the uncarpeted stairway and gained the end of the corridor. There was no package leaning against his door, but directly across the way through the open door of Room 10, he glimpsed a barrel shaped fellow in shirtsleeves seated on the edge of an unmade bed. His hair was tousled, his heavy features were unshaven and his greedy eyes were fastened upon a gray suit which he was holding aloft. The garments were fashioned of distinctive Harris tweed, and the wrappings on the floor indicated recent arrival.

Unquestionably a mistake had been made. Either the fellow had crossed the corridor and appropriated the package, or it had been left at the wrong room. Impulsively Cornelius crossed to the threshold of Room 10 and addressed its occupant.

"Pardon, monsieur, some mistake has been made. That is my suit."

The touseled head turned on its muscular neck and a pair of liquor bleared eyes stared insolently at the American.

"How do I know it is your suit? It was left at the door of my room. What fish swim into the net of Gaston Moreau stay there for him to enjoy. Get out!"

The burly one's manner was truculent. Judged by his tone Cornelius put him down as being from southern France, doubtless a rough and ready man of the sea.

Angered, the American stepped into the room and snatched up the wrappings from the floor.

"This particular fish is in the wrong net," he snapped, pointing to the superscription on the label.

He turned to seize his clothing, but even as his arm was outstretched for this purpose, Moreau lurched to his feet and lashed out with his huge fist. The blow was a surprise. It caught Cornelius full on the chest and sent him reeling back a few paces. Quickly, however, he recovered himself, leaped and struck. Moreau's head rocked to the impact of the blow. His arms relaxed and he slumped backward to his original position on the edge of the bed.

But Gaston Moreau was by no means out of the fight. A rough and tumble man was he, adept at *la savate* and practised in the accurate hurling of bottles. Cornelius evaded the flying feet and likewise dodged the first bottle snatched from the card littered table near the head of the bed. But as a second bottle grazed his ear he became enraged to the point of retaliating in kind.

A thick bottomed wine bottle stood on the window sill near at hand. He seized it and let fly with all his strength. True to aim the object sped; it struck Moreau squarely in the forehead. He crumpled and lay still and simultaneously came a woman's scream from the doorway.

Now the American turned his attention to the *concierge*. She had fainted. With a wary eye on the prostrate form of Moreau, he found water and bathed her temples.

Her eyes opened. She blinked them and peered across the room.

"Is—is he dead?"

Moreau was breathing heavily. A livid semicircle on the forehead showed where the bottle had found its mark. Cornelius slipped his hand inside the shirt and felt the strong and rhythmic beating of a stout heart.

"Knocked out," he explained to the woman, who now stood on her feet staring open mouthed at the unconscious tenant.

Cornelius was in no mood for nursing the unprepossessing Moreau and, retrieving the gray suit from the floor, passed from the room, the *concierge* following and closing the door.

IN HIS own room the American changed his clothing and put aside for all time his uniform. No sound came from the chamber across the hall, but later, returning from a leisurely dinner at one of the many little establishments along the nearby Boul' Miche', he heard a grumbling of voices through the closed door of Room 10, and reasoned that Moreau had not only regained his senses, but had visitors.

Cornelius had had a long day. Tired, but by no means seriously disturbed by his encounter with a half drunken rowdy who had picked upon the Hôtel Suisse for headquarters, he sought his bed and found honest sleep.

How long he would have slept is problematical, for at a peremptory knock at the door he opened his eyes to see three strangers entering unbidden. Two of them were uniformed *sergents de ville;* the third, a shrewd faced fellow in civilian attire.

"Monsieur," the latter said, "you are under arrest." His manner was politely authoritative.

Cornelius sat up. The remnants of sleep fell from him as he grew rigid, the red of righteous indignation burning his cheeks. He turned from the police officer who had placed himself at his elbow, and addressed the spokesman seemingly in command.

"What is the charge?" he demanded.

"There is no formal complaint yet," the latter replied. "When monsieur the coroner has completed his report, you may be charged with murder. It is now my duty to take you to the Préfecture for interrogation."

Meurtre! The ugly word stirred Cornelius to his depths.

"Murder," he repeated. "Monsieur, I have done no murder."

But the police agent had heard impassioned denials made before. Ignoring his prisoner for the moment, he turned to the doorway and beckoned some one standing outside to enter. Cornelius recognized the frowzy *concierge.*

"This is the man," the woman said. "I saw him throw the bottle."

A vague wonderment possessed Cornelius. What could possibly have happened since he left Room 10?

"I admit having a fight in the room across the hall," he said, "but as for killing anybody—"

A cold touch at his wrist cut short the protest. He was permitted to dress, and then led handcuffed from the room.

CHAPTER II

THE DRY GUILLOTINE

IN THE prison of La Santé, an edifice of steel and stone, Cornelius Storm was held for trial at the Assizes of the Seine. A lawyer took his money and promised to do his very best to free him.

"If you only had a witness to the fact that this Moreau was merely stunned," the attorney said time and time again, "I would have a sound foundation for defense."

And always Cornelius would answer:

"If they found him with his head smashed in, and lying near the door, some one else is responsible. I've told nothing but the truth."

The court dockets were unusually full. August and September passed—sixty-one sunless days in the bowels of La Santé; sixty-one seemingly endless nights when the stone corridors rang to the heels of pacing guards, rousing Cornelius from dreams of boyhood days and parents long since dead and buried. Those nights would have been welcome had the dreams all been of that nature. But they were not. Through sultry night hours he lived through the war again.

The corridor, dimly lighted, was full of bodies, pieces and fragments of bodies. It was the Land of No Man, lurid flares floating overhead shedding a ghastly light on the horrors below. Again the scene would change. He was an executioner now, and in charge of the guillotine. Blood drenched to the armpits, merciless, he dropped the awful knife—then came to

life and heard the keys of morning ringing in the locks of old Santé. So passed those days and nights.

There came a morning when he sat on a bench at the Assizes and watched and listened while a hopeless fight was being waged for his liberty, if not his very life. Judges and jury listened to the *concierge* attentively. She told only the truth, but unerringly the prosecutor touched the weak spot in the line of defense. Now he asked two damnable questions.

"Do you of your own direct knowledge know the extent of the injury inflicted upon the deceased at the time you revived from your faint?"

The *concierge* could but answer no.

"Do you know of any reason why a dying man can not crawl from one position to another—the position where the body was found?"

An objection from the defense relieved the *concierge* from answering, but the question itself had the effect desired by the prosecutor. From glances cast in his direction by members of the jury, Cornelius judged that his own straightforward testimony was not wholly believed. He sensed that he was not believed by his own counsel. The theory of the prosecutor that while the *concierge* lay insensible he had with murderous intent struck Moreau again and again was not far fetched. It seemed the only logical conclusion. It became the conclusion of the jury; it was the conclusion of the judges and evident in their sentence.

Now the attorney was making a plea for mercy. This defendant was a young man of honorable reputation—had fought manfully through eighteen months of the war—had great provocation and had acted in self-defense. His voice droned on and on, and suddenly ceased. The prosecutor had nothing to add. A mental numbness came over Cornelius.

He saw—much as a disinterested spectator might have seen—the three judges confer briefly. The presiding magistrate made a notation on a writing pad and passed it first to one and then to the other of his associates. They nodded in turn, and sat back in their chairs. The judge in the center now spoke.

"In view of the element of provocation," he began, "and taking into consideration the honorable war record of the prisoner, it is not the intent of this court to inflict the extreme penalty. Instead, and in punishment for a most brutal assault which cost a human life, the prisoner is sentenced to a life term of penal servitude at hard labor in Guiana."

"*Travaux forcés à perpétuité à Guyane!*"

There was a scratching of pens on the desks above Cornelius. There was a shuffling of feet as the room slowly emptied. And then he was led away.

For a few yards his attorney kept pace with him, uttering words, words, words. Cornelius neither heard them nor cared. For him the sun had set.

Back again at La Santé a fellow hailed him from a cell across the corridor.

"What did you get?" he asked.

Dully Cornelius looked over at the other, as yet untried for murder.

"What did you get?" he asked again.

"Guiana—for life," Cornelius answered mechanically.

"The dry guillotine!" exclaimed an invisible prisoner somewhere down the line.

"They never come back," another unseen prisoner declared; and now a debate ensued as to the relative merits of the "wet" or "dry" guillotine, the number of years a convict could withstand the climate of the penal colony, and other points involving geography, ethics and political economy.

Men stood at their doors and maintained that Guiana was in Africa, below Algeria, and that it was in South America at the mouth of the Amazon. There were no women within a thousand miles—each convict was given a black woman. No smoking was permitted—each convict had a private patch of tobacco. The only recreation allowed was checker playing, but on account of a man's hands always being chained together behind him, the pieces were moved by the nose.

Misinformation was hurled into the corridor. Again and again the lie was

passed. Details absurd and horrible were volunteered, denied, until the rattle of the supper cart and clanging of tins changed the nature of the uproar.

Far into the night Cornelius sat with bowed head, musing upon the queer gift which life was.

Morning came, and with it no visit from his attorney. But he was not left entirely without information as to his immediate future.

"This very forenoon," a kindly keeper told him, "you are to be taken to the train with others and sent to the convict depot at St. Martin on the Ile de Ré, where you will be kept a few weeks until the sailing of the next transport to South America."

CHAPTER III

ST. LAURENT

FROM the mouth of the mighty Amazon near where the equator slashes the South American continent, the scarlet and yellow *toucan* bird flies to the city of Cayenne in five or six hours. A flap or two of its jet black wings, a long glide of a score of miles, and the gorgeous bird might alight on any one of the three Iles de Salut brought into prominence at the time of the imprisonment there of the innocent Dreyfus.

Should the bird continue on its way northwest along the coast of French Guiana a flight of two more hours should find it over the prison hell of St. Laurent du Maroni, headquarters and depot of distribution for the dry guillotine of France.

Beyond the straggling settlement of huts and more ambitious structures housing guards and prison officials, one approaches the walled enclosure containing the penitentiary, the disciplinary house and various outbuildings of brick. Here is collected the choicest assortment of rascals ever assembled in modern times. Many of them should have faced a firing squad. Many of their heads should rightly have fallen beneath the blade of the guillotine. Instead, France banished them to dwell at the edge of a jungle, there to labor in mill or trench until death by disease or violence claims them, and their bodies are given to the quicklime of the grave. Half of the *relégués* fail to survive the third year. Very few of them escape, although many are the attempts at it.

Five to eight miles wide in the rainy season, the amber waters of the jungle stained Maroni slip by the prison hell to mingle with the sea. A log of precious wood floats by, with perhaps a priceless orchid clinging to the crotch of a rotted limb. Birds of gorgeous plumage, butterflies in black velvet splashed with jasper and beryl, wing their way above the nodding bamboos fencing in the convict graveyard.

All is beautiful. All is horrible. Vultures waddle in the shadow of the guillotine unhooded twice yearly after the sessions of the Maritime Tribunal, and oft the falling blade frees some desperate wretch from a life no longer endurable.

In such a place, thrust among the debased and depraved, lived and labored Cornelius Storm, now deprived of his name and designated as No. 48,987.

The voyage to Guiana in the iron cages of the convict transport was the first phase of a series of indignities inflicted after the trial. The final glimpse through a porthole of the last bit of French headland sinking into the sea marked the ending of a chapter of an existence which might well have been the life of some other man. It was unreal. It was vague. Yet in his feverish mind the hope of escape and rehabilitation was born. It was ever with him. In the log shed by day, where giant saws bit the bark from precious woods, the voice of freedom hushed the snarl and scream of machinery.

Often during these day dreams came fleeting periods of ecstacy when for the moment the horrors of the present were blotted utterly. Gone from sight were the armed warders perched in comparative comfort on their folding stools, their sun umbrellas spread above them. Gone were the sweating wretches, black and white, yellow and brown, with numbers

stenciled across their breasts. And in their stead he pictured himself scrambling through the wild vanilla scented jungle, the voice of freedom sweeter in his ears than the silver warbling of orioles at the fall of evening.

It was during October that he had been tried and sentenced. Early November found him in the flat crowned hat of coarse straw, the wooden soled brogans, the flimsy shirt and pantaloons of the convict gang assigned to the sawmill. A coat was his, with bold numbers stenciled on the breast. At first he had eyed it askance. Under the broiling sun a coat seemed but an added punishment. But with the rainy season now well under way Cornelius cherished the garment and wished at times it were thicker.

Under the sheds of the mill itself he could keep dry. His work of log piking and piling kept him warm after the temperature had fallen fifty points and the chilly downpour fed rivulets which gouged the banks of the muddy and swollen Maroni. During the daily marches between mill and penitentiary the coat was usually a welcome though sodden rag. Cold rains of late afternoon fell from a saffron sky as the miserable procession wound its way through the muddy lanes of the civilian settlement before halting at the prison gates for the customary search.

Again, on the morning march to work, when from a cloudless sky the white hot sun glared over the steaming jungle, clothing of any description was a curse and a burden.

THE BLACK convicts from Senegal withstood the heat best and were perhaps the most contented of the wretches imprisoned in St. Laurent. Other blacks were there from Dahomey, Guinea and the Ivory Coast, from Cameroon, Somaliland and the French Congo. Insofar as possible, racial segregation was observed. Thus, there was a black wing, a brown wing, and separate wings for yellow and white. In the work gangs black was herded with fellow black. Yellow men from Cambodia and Annam, from Tonkin, Laos and Kwangchow, labored and slept beside other countrymen from Cochin and Indo-China.

Representing the brown race were French subjects from Madagascar and Oceanica in the far Pacific. Other slim shanked, brown *relégués* were there from Pondicherry and Karikai settlements of the Bay of Bengal. Likewise there was a strong contingent of saddle colored Mohammedans from Algeria and Tunis, and French Morocco.

White convicts predominated numerically, and suffered exile for the most part in expiation of crimes involving moral turpitude. From France proper and her many colonies these white rascals constituted a choice assortment of hardened and habitual criminals. Burglars and highwaymen, thieves convicted time and again, rubbed shoulders with murderers and *maquereaux* from Paris, Lyons and Marseille. Whereas, among the non-whites might be found convicts exiled for tribal-political cause, for desertion from, or mutiny in, one of the native regiments, the whites were mostly desperate or despicable characters.

To Cornelius, interested even in his hours of misery, came bits of information which, pieced together, gave him a history of the most notorious penal settlement of modern times. He learned that in the days of the French Revolution, and more particularly after 1851, Guiana had been used by France for penal purposes. For a brief period New Caledonia in the South Pacific was used for white convicts, Guiana being reserved for non-white colonials. Then the policy was altered, and again Guiana was used for all colors and creeds. And so it was in this year of Our Lord.

To Cornelius, the locked in hours were the worst feature of prison life. Despite the grueling nature of the daily toil, the awful heat of noonday, the gruffness of the guards, he welcomed the departure from the dormitory where he had been quartered since the day of his arrival.

In that sour smelling chamber were twenty-four plank beds—a dozen on each side of the room. A narrow shelf at the head of each bed held a blanket of sorts, a rag of a towel, and perhaps a sliver of soap. The flimsy coats, rolled around the shoes, served as pillows. There were no mattresses, or sheets, or changes of garments. There was a foul sink at one end of the room, twenty-four buckets of galvanized iron, and a grated window set high in a steel wall.

Obscene and ribald phrases had been penciled on the painted walls, and here and there at the head of the plank beds nude and suggestive pictures from *La Vie Parisienne* and other periodicals were pasted. Bathing beauties of bovine pulchritude, actresses of considerable avoirdupois, shared wall space with tattered favorites of a bygone generation. Mlle. Fougere and Gaby Deslys fed the imagination of the woman starved wretches, and in the case of the so called "king's favorite" unspeakable addition in crayon had been given both figure and text.

As in circles social and financial, so this tropic prison had its leaders: those who fared or dressed better than their fellows, those who through some mysterious and unseen influence obtained weekly tobacco and casual flasks of vile alcohol or fiery rum.

Remarkable in this respect was the dormitory where Cornelius slept, for here was quartered the notorious Club of the Deformed, a ring of prison "politicians" the members of which were deformed or mutilated in body as in soul. Possessed of the choicest plank bed—that nearest the grated window—one Jules la Pêche was iron fisted chairman of this disfigured band and undisputed in authority.

A tanner and leather worker by trade, Jules had found his way into the Foreign Legion and eventually to St. Laurent on the banks of the Maroni. A set of tattooing needles and a tobacco pouch of softest leather were souvenirs of an adventurous past and used almost nightly.

Never would Cornelius forget his second night in the dormitory when The Peach related to the newcomers his story of the origin of the pouch.

"It is of finest leather," he had said, holding the pouch aloft in the light of the wire guarded incandescent bulb near his bed. "It is as yellow as ivory from Siam, and as soft as a woman's bosom . . . I tanned the pouch myself. I know my trade."

Night after night, the miserable ration of thin soup and rice swallowed, the cronics would gather around their leader and watch him at his tattooing while discussing vague plans for escape. To the ears of Cornelius, lying flat on his plank and apart from the group, came stories of connecting water trails flooded in the rainy season. There were bush negroes and *pirogues* hollowed by fire from tree trunks.

It was less than a week's journey with a guide and a canoe to Paramaribo in Dutch Guiana, where with a friend to meet one or a modest sum of money, passage could be had to Cuba or the United States. Was it not but one year ago that Emile, the hairdresser, had floated to Paramaribo and gone to New York "under the bananas"? Word had filtered back to St. Laurent that he was doing well under another name, and had actually married the manicure girl who sent him silver for the bush negroes and gold for the officers of the fruit steamer.

What had been done could be done again. With a little help from the outside an escape to the bright lights and flesh pots of civilization was possible. Eventually there would be white tablecloths and sparkling wine. There would be rich foods and jolly music; beautiful women . . .

So, nightly, the bars of the dormitory were bended, the jungle pushed back, and each wretch flew in fancy over an ocean of Beaujolais to feast with fair maidens and shout songs of freedom. And, curiously enough, no matter how despicable or debased, how ungrateful or cruel in the past, how unpromising in the future, nearly every creature in the dormitory had some one who still cared, some one who wished that he were free.

As Emile, the hairdresser, had his manicurist, so had most of them a mother, a sweetheart, a chum or a devoted sister. Although he might have robbed that mother and disappointed her a score of times, although he might have betrayed chum, beaten sister or driven sweetheart to the streets, some one of them still fanned the spark of hope which burned eternally, if fitfully, in nearly every breast in the prison chamber.

As for Cornelius, he had no one. Orphan as he was, the best years of his life having been given to war and its aftermath, he was peculiarly alone as far as friends and relations were concerned. Yet, shorn as he was of the dignities and comforts of life, faith and hope remained to him. He could wait through the months. He must be brave.

CHAPTER IV

A FRIEND IS WON

WEATHER permitting, in small detachments, prisoners were allowed to bathe in the Maroni. A clear afternoon in February found the saw mill gang knee deep in the amber waters abreast their shed, laving themselves as best they might, with neither soap nor brushes to help them to a state of cleanliness. Some of the weaker sat disconsolately in the mud at the edge of the river. Others splashed half-heartedly a few yards from the bank, while some of the bolder and stronger breasted the sluggish stream for short swims.

Cornelius was of the latter number. Always a powerful swimmer, he now struck out and headed for the deeper water. Mindful of the guard, he turned presently and gained the shallower water and stood watching enviously the pier a hundred yards or so upstream where a solitary figure clad in a sky-blue bathing suit was engaged in fancy diving from a springboard.

Cornelius knew the pier to be sacred to the use of prison officers and clerks, and was speculating on the identity of the diver in the blue suit, when it became apparent that something had gone wrong. Heretofore the somersaulting and jackknifing had been cleanly performed, but following a cracking sound as of a loosened or broken bolt, the diver had fallen awkwardly and had struck the water's surface with a resounding splash.

"Stunned," Cornelius breathed to himself as for an instant a bit of blue flecked the amber surface of the Maroni, and then sank from sight.

Again, still nearer, the blue figure became visible, and vanished for the second time. The guard had seen what promised to become a tragedy, and now bellowed orders at his nude charges.

"Go for him!" he called to those standing farthest out.

Cornelius both heard and understood. With no fear of a bullet overtaking him, he took a few steps toward midstream, and then with powerful strokes headed for a point where he thought the drowning man might possibly reappear. He was not far wrong, for as his fast and long unused overhand crawl bore him swiftly to the chosen spot a bare arm flashed into view and as quickly disappeared. Making allowance for the drift of the current, Cornelius surface-dived and swam stoutly toward the limp body which soon appeared dimly before him.

Many times at life saving drill the American had rehearsed the acts he now performed. He grasped the hair of the unconscious man, and together they found the bottom. Here, away from the muddy banks, it was firm enough to afford impetus to the upward spring which Cornelius gave, and as the surface was gained the latter shifted his grip and slipped easily into the standardized "cross-chest carry". A few yards, and help came from one of the stronger among the convict swimmers. Together they gained the bank and dragged their burden to a place of comparative safety.

But Cornelius was not yet through. Quickly now he placed the diver flat on his stomach on a convenient bed of sawdust and then drew the right arm straight

out before him. The head on one side, rested on the left wrist. Now Cornelius knelt astride the legs of the unconscious man and pressed rhythmically on the latter's lower ribs. The guard was complacent. He saw that the American prisoner knew his business, and stood now above his open mouthed charges watching the patient flexing of the diver's ribs and other movements long since approved and adopted by experts in the art of resuscitation.

A thousand times Cornelius pressed and lifted in accordance with the "prone pressure" method he had been taught. He neither knew nor cared about the identity of the blue clad fellow beneath him. On and on he labored, and in the end was rewarded with the sound of strangled breath fighting its way in and out of the clogged lungs.

Soon the apparently stilled heart resumed its beating, and as the moment came to roll the sufferer on his back, and wipe his mouth, Cornelius viewed with satisfaction the approach of another guard, a flask in his hand.

A spoonful of brandy trickled down the throat of the diver. He sputtered. His brown eyes opened. A scarred cheek twitched. And Cornelius recognized in him a runner trusty who enjoyed privileges accorded to no other prisoner at St. Laurent.

Still other guards and a civilian or two came up now and the saw mill gang was ordered to dress and return to its labors. From a distance Cornelius saw the fellow he had rescued assisted away, and then, pike in hand, he resumed the work interrupted by the permission to bathe.

He was tired. The strenuous overhand crawl, the long fifteen minutes of muscular effort expended during the first aid work, had all but exhausted him. From time to time he rested on his pike, a wary eye on the guard, while wondering what manner of man he had pulled from the river. Twice the guard noted the idle American prisoner, but gave no heed to the infraction of the rules. Had he not, indeed, earned a little rest?

IT WAS evening of the next day when Cornelius stood at the sink near the barred door of the dormitory, washing his supper pan, when he heard the soft calling of his number. He drew near the door and found a runner trusty peering through at him. It was the man he had saved from drowning.

At the far end of the dormitory, members of the Deformed Club were busy with their nightly story telling. Other unfortunates lay stretched on their planks, each occupied with his own reflections, miserable or otherwise. None of them paid the slightest attention to Cornelius as he stood at the door.

Often during his weeks of confinement the American had noticed the dapper little runner who now stood confronting him. He knew that this fellow was called Max, and now he wondered what shape the privileged character's gratitude would assume. The light burning over the sink shone full upon the face of the trusty, disclosing features delicately molded, although disfigured by a scar beneath one cheek-bone. Other characteristics were a small mustache waxed at both ends, and brown eyes which beamed with pleasure and gratitude. A hand slipped through the bars.

"My friend!" Max breathed.

"Softly," Cornelius cautioned as the pressure on his swollen and bruised hand became painful.

"I understand," Max said. "It is those damned poisonous splinters. I have a plan for you. It may take time to work out. I will tell you more about it tomorrow. I will hurry away now and write a letter which may bring results. *Au revoir!*"

Another handclasp, retreating footsteps down the corridor, and Max was gone.

Next day, pike in hand, Cornelius rested for a few minutes while watching the saw tear through a giant log of purple heart. He would have seated himself on a pile of timber nearby, or flung himself at length on the muddy and sloping bank,

but convicts were forbidden so to rest. It was enough, their work well in hand, that in groups numbering not more than three, they were permitted to lean on their tools and converse in low tones.

The guard in charge of the saw mill, lolling at ease in a cane chair while enjoying a periodical brought in by the monthly steamer, nodded familiarly to a prisoner who entered the shed and saluted him before crossing to Cornelius. It was Max, immaculate as to linen, and clad in a well fitting prison uniform obviously tailored to his measure. Canvas shoes, freshly pipe clayed, were on his feet; a Panama hat of fine quality was set at a jaunty angle on his head. As he drew near Cornelius noted that his trousers were actually pressed.

"I have written my letter," the privileged one said softly as he halted before Cornelius and fingered an end of his small mustache. "We shall see what we shall see," he continued, smiling knowingly. "Silence is the watchword. Trust no one. Very shortly I hope to see you at a better job."

The runner turned and sauntered off unattended in the direction of the town. Idly the guard watched; then he yawned and laid aside his paper. Slowly he arose and approached Cornelius.

"You should have known Max in Paris," he said.

Cornelius made no comment. Words would have been useless, for the huge saw nearby had now bitten into the butt of a mahogany log. With the falling of the slab and the upward thrust of the mighty steel dog as it flopped the log over for another cut, the snarling scream of the saw stopped and conversation became once more possible.

Never before had the guard addressed him conversationally. Now, to the astonishment of Cornelius, he became almost chatty.

"Our most remarkable prisoner," he volunteered. "Shaves every day—and massages too. Never locked up. Numbers *embroidered*, if you please, on a tailor made uniform."

Again log struck saw, and the shed rang to the hellish music. Still the guard lingered. When it became possible, Cornelius ventured a question.

"Might I ask about the secret of his privileges? How he can go and come as he pleases?"

The features of the guard relaxed in a quizzical grin.

"Max is a dressmaker. At one time he was a leading couturier of Paris. He did for a pretty mannequin—barely escaped having his head fall into the basket. The other woman in the case, so as to be near him, followed him to Guiana and runs a café in Cayenne. Now he's the pet of the director's wife. Designs all her gowns. Makes creations for madame the lady of the governor-general down at Cayenne."

Once again the saw tore into the precious wood. What might have been sounds of a not unfriendly parting salutation issued from the guard's lips. Stroking a grizzled mustache, giving his charges an all-embracing glance, he moved slowly toward his comfortable chair.

In the dormitory that evening, his soup and rice swallowed, his cup and pan polished, Cornelius divided his time between musing on this newly found friend and the doings of the club members at the far end of the chamber. Jules the Peach sat busily plying his needle, while others of the tattooed and deformed *cercle* squatted around and passed coarse jokes.

On this particular evening a burglar from Lyons was having the finishing touches put to certain letters pricked along the skin over his collarbone. Now Cornelius knew why this fellow had been dubbed Necklace, for a line of purple dots had been tattooed around his neck and throat. Hidden by day by the neckband of the prison shirt, the necklace was now visible. And below it, in bold letters of Gothic, one could read the sinister instructions: *Cut on the dotted line!*

"They will, no doubt, cut on that dotted line," Cornelius mused as he paced up and down the dormitory, for it was well known among the prisoners that Necklace

was tired of life and had sworn to kill a certain night guard when opportunity offered.

"Where I go, my girl goes," chanted a crack brained *relégué* who once had specialized in thieving from railroad trains. On his semi-bald head he had induced the Peach to tattoo the outlines of a female form. Perhaps a half-hundred times daily he chanted his song and pointed to the "girl who would never deceive him". Again, for days at a time, he would sit or move about in brooding silence.

"Where I go my girl goes," sang the halfwit loudly.

But the joke was old.

"That girl will never earn a dollar for you," was the only comment drawn—this from a *maquereau* whose greasy locks were combed to hide the places where ears once had been.

Gruesome sights and sounds mingled with pleasant thoughts on what the future might hold for him alternately disgusted and cheered Cornelius as he passed the time, and waited for the nightly dimming of the lights. Over and over again the song of the thief rang out above the coarse chatter like the *leit-motif* of an opera conceived in shame and born in hell.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW JOB

APRIL rains fell on the unexplored slopes of the Tumac-Humac Mountains, washing the upland jungles and filling to their bank tops the Surinam River on Dutch Guiana soil and the Maroni which flowed by the lumber mill of St. Laurent.

It was the last of the rainy season, and the busiest month of the year at the mill, for at St. Jean du Maroni and other "punishment camps" situated upstream, incorrigibles among the *relégués* had felled and floated thousands of precious logs. The last big raft of the high water run was now in, and a hundred of the strongest prisoners had augmented the regular gang at the mill and were laboring with peavy and pole, floating, rolling and parbuckling the logs handy for the sawyers.

Cornelius, for the time being a petty boss, was with a dozen Senegalese deep in a tangle of purple heart and mahogany, when he looked up as his number was called. Standing beside the guard, a silk umbrella shielding him from the morning downpour, Cornelius recognized Max. The guard beckoned. Waist deep in water and yellow slime, Cornelius left his post and climbed the bank.

"You will go with Max to your dormitory," the guard ordered. "Clean yourself and report as soon as possible to *monsieur le directeur*."

It was a strange order. The two set forth and slopped on their way through the village: Max with pleasant thoughts all his own, Cornelius buoyed with hope. Max was the first to break the silence. Edging a bit of his umbrella over his dripping companion, he proceeded to congratulate him.

"My letter has worked," he said, "for you've fallen into a fat place. Good food, tender filets and a sop of wine, all the caporal tobacco you can roll and smoke."

"It's a change for the better," Cornelius answered, devoured with curiosity as to where he was to be berthed and how the transfer had been accomplished.

Max was disposed to chat on the subject. One feature of it seemed to afford him considerable amusement.

"You're to replace Jean Tabac-Pot," he said. "Do you know the surly one?"

Cornelius shook his head.

"Never heard of John Tobacco Pot," he declared.

"Evidently you've never reported yourself sick. Tabac-Pot works for Milius, the *médecin-chef* of this gorgeous establishment."

With his free hand Max waved contemptuously at that arc of the horizon which embraced the distant gates of the penitentiary, the nearby squalid huts and frowzy shops perched on their foundation pillars of brick.

Cornelius splashed on, making no comment. He felt that Max would tell him more. Nor was he disappointed.

"Tabac-Pot dishes out the pills and takes the temperatures of the morning sick liners," Max continued. "He's a drunkard. A liter of *vin rouge* a day isn't enough for him. He has to drink up the alcohol from the specimens. Yesterday the doctor found him helping himself to his personal brandy. You're to take his place. It's on record that you were an American officer familiar with bandaging and first aid work. You'll get along fine with Milius. You'll live outside the gates and be practically a free man. Eventually I hope to be able to help you to real freedom."

They reached the gates and entered. They traversed the prison yard and passed unchallenged through the guard room, Max's presence seeming to be a guarantee that all was regular. The smile of the ex-*couturier*, the mere lifting of his finger, acted as an open sesame to which bars were drawn and steel gates flung open.

Gaining the dormitory, Cornelius bent over the sink and rinsed the mud from his person as best he could. Next he donned a dry shirt and an extra pair of trousers which would long since have been stolen from him but for the fact that they were worn and patched and bore his stenciled number. Through his hair and beard he ran a comb, and turned to face Max.

"It is the best I can do in the way of a toilet," he said.

The dapper Max inspected, shrugged his shoulders at the wooden soled brogans which still oozed river water, and led the way back out through the corridor and guard room and to the office of *monsieur le directeur* of the penitentiary.

Abundant and glossy of beard was the head of the penal establishment of St. Laurent du Maroni. He might have passed for an *avocat* of standing in some provincial town of France, perhaps for one of the professors at the Sorbonne, for he was mild of manner, ponderous in movement, learned in bearing and appearance. Speculatively he eyed Cornelius through the unpolished lenses of his pince-nez and roused himself from his inertia sufficiently to hitch himself an inch or two nearer his desk.

"This is No. 48,987," Max reported, and then stood idly by, fingering a point of his mustache.

The director pawed among the papers on his desk. Presently he found a personal communication from the governor-general at Cayenne. For the third time he read that it would be agreeable to that official if light and congenial work could be found for the American prisoner Cornelius Storm, and that it was the wish of his Excellency that such a berth be found and reported upon.

"You have a good friend in Cayenne," the director commented, looking up.

"I have," Cornelius answered boldly as it flashed upon him that Max designed gowns for the wife of his Excellency.

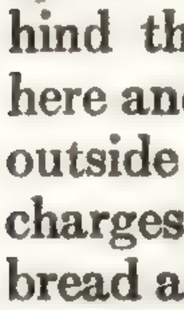
"*Bien!*" *Monsieur le directeur* grunted approval. He discovered a toothpick and used it while thinking up suitable speech with which to accompany the bestowal of the plum.

"Had I my own way," he said at length, "there would be *cuisine soignée* and easy work for every lifer. But the lifers are many and the easy places few. You are favored above many. Go you with Max to the *médecin-chef*, Milius. Work faithfully for him, letting his cognac and anisette severely alone. You will replace Jean Tabac-Pot, thief and drunkard, now reduced from clerk to gardener in the house of Milius."

Cornelius uttered a word of thanks. With Max he turned to leave, when he was recalled. Evidently the director had just noticed the moist tracks left on his floor, or had glimpsed the patched trousers.

"We can't have you working around an officer in those rags," he said, scribbling meanwhile on a memorandum pad. "Take this with you to the storekeeper. Get something that will fit. You, Max, see that he has a hot bath and a haircut."

"*Oui, mon Directeur,*" Max responded. Then, order slip in hand, he once more led the way.



WARM water drove the chill from his frame, eased the aches and pains engendered of river soaking, and as Cornelius dried himself and slipped into a decent uniform a bit of the old spirit came to him. Laved and barbered, a comfortable pair of shoes replacing the wooden soled brogans, he left the prison, and was guided by Max to the bachelor establishment of Surgeon Milius.

It had stopped raining. As the two passed through the iron gates and picked their way along the muddy apology for a street, the noonday drums sounded behind them. Answering whistles shrilled here and there as guards in yard and shop outside the prison walls mustered their charges preparatory to the issuing of bread and soup. Soon a *corvée* of convicts splashed by, its miserable units forced to march in close order, thus unable to escape the deeper pools of yellow mud.

Curiously Cornelius stared about him as they gained the main street of the town. He saw the church whose bell had for months been tolling in his ears the call to morning masses and evening vespers, counting off the bitter hours of the day. He saw the blue and white Palais de Justice over which floated the Tricolor of France. He noted dingy shops attended by Chinese and Portuguese merchants in a small way. Cheaply and scantily dressed women, black, white and yellow, lured forth by the reappearance of the sun, now trod the drier stretches of the ambitiously named Boulevard de la Republique. Another *corvée* of prisoners marched by, a team of oxen crept along after it, the rumbling of the dray behind it all but drowning the scuffling and clattering of brogans.

It was quieter in the Rue Voltaire, for here, along a thoroughfare bordered by coconut palms were situated the villas of the higher officials. An exotic fragrance filled the rain cooled air. The scarlet of hibiscus greeted the eye at every turn. Mammoth vines of bougainvillea here overflowed low walls of brick, now and then to climb and empurple a stately palm, here and there to fling a gorgeous mantle over parapet of masonry or humble roof of tin.

It were paradise, indeed, but for the wattled vultures now in evidence on every hand. In little squads, safe from the traffic on the busier boulevard, they flapped their rusty black wings and scuttled from beneath the feet of the two prisoners. Perched along the walls, companies of the scavenger bird roosted in ominous lines. Battalions of them wheeled and maneuvered in the overhead sky, now of deepest azure.

Almost at the end of the street, and within a stone's toss of the encroaching jungle, Max halted and pointed with his furled umbrella.

"There is your future hotel," he said with an accompanying smile. "There you'll find a most considerate master and a black Martiniquaise cook. She makes a divine *baba au rhum* and a fair *bearnaise.*"

Looking in the direction indicated, Cornelius saw a wall enclosed garden, beyond which was a brick villa all but drowned in an ocean of bougainvillea. There was a bit of lawn which gave evidence of careful trimming and weeding, and even as Cornelius and his guide opened the gate and passed up the flower bordered walk, they saw the prisoner gardener hard at work on bended knees.

"Jean Tabac-Pot," Max breathed as they passed the fellow and were favored with an evil stare.

In a low tone the speaker continued:

"If it weren't for the fact that he's an expert trapper of butterflies, Médecin-Chef Milius would have had him put at work in the coffin shop long ago. For be it known that for our good surgeon, the world holds but two things: butterflies of one kind, and butterflies of another."

Now they were at the veranda of the villa, where instead of enjoying a siesta on one of the swinging couches visible, a

sparely built man sat stooped over a table littered with winged specimens. Reluctantly he turned from these candidates for admission to his collection to give attention to the new clerk. Max saluted carelessly and made off.

Sharp eyes were directed on Cornelius, who in turn appraised his new master. He saw a man of sixty-odd, with face unbelievedly yellowed and traced with whimsical lines.

"Have you any knowledge of the *papillon?*" Dr. Milius asked abruptly.

Cornelius smilingly confessed his ignorance on the score of butterflies and moths, but added that he was anxious to enter upon his new duties—whatever they might be—and to prove his value.

From beneath enormous eyebrows the medical man studied the American and found in his dignified bearing a quality which pleased him.

"Never mind the lack of *papillon* learning. You will have leisure in which to take it up. Gradually I will instruct you as to your duties. They will not be arduous. Your first task is to report to the kitchen and fortify yourself with luncheon."

Waved away, Cornelius was about to explore the rear of the villa, when Milius recalled him.

"You are here for murder, I understand," the surgeon-savant ventured softly.

Cornelius stiffened. Words of hot denial would have issued from him but that he detected a quizzical expression on the scholarly countenance.

"So you will eat sparingly of meat," the *médecin-chef* resumed, "for it heats the blood and leads to killings. And by the way, if you should have a falling out with Tabac-Pot, as you probably will, do not quite kill him until he nets me a female Argea."

Dr. Milius chuckled, then once again gave undivided attention to his specimens. Cornelius, dazed not a little by the abrupt transition from the log mill and dormitory of the deformed to the peaceful little ménage of a collector of butterflies, stepped softly away and toward the rear.

So, by the grace of Max and the vanity of woman, a restful phase lightened the martyrdom of Cornelius Storm.

The work required of him, as Milius had truly said, was not arduous. There was an early morning trip to the penitentiary where the sick line formed. Once the malingerers were weeded out and the serious cases sent to hospital there followed a routine visit to the latter institution where a junior assistant lived and bore the brunt of the work. Cornelius now handled the roll call of those reporting sick, checking off the disposition of each case. He prepared requisition blanks for signature. He bore messages between hospital and villa and penitentiary. He became, in fact, the right hand man of the *papillon* gatherer, easily the wisest and most genial of the prison executives at St. Laurent du Maroni. Good food, ample clothing and considerate treatment wrought changes in his person. Health glowed once more within him, there was vigor in his pace, new fire in his eyes.

Now and again in the course of his duties he met Max, and they had many opportunities for private converse.

"So far, so good," the ex-*couturier* told him several times. "Very shortly I shall begin laying plans for your escape. When they are ripe, I will tell you what to do."

Buoyed up with this fresh hope, Cornelius carried on, for freedom beckoned.

CHAPTER VI

THE PLAN RIPENS

THE MISTS of the rainy season lifted and vanished. The jungle steamed less and less as May waned and the pitiless suns of June scorched man and beast of St. Laurent. Sunstroke was now of frequent occurrence. In mill and workshop, in dormitory by night and in trench by day, *relégués* dropped, died, and were, ere the rising of another sun, buried in the convict graveyard.

Victims of the dry guillotine of France, no ceremony accompanied the final disposal of their wasted and fever ridden bodies. No stone marked their resting places. The scrape of shovel, the thud of pick, was their dirge; the rustling fronds of bamboo and palm their requiem.

Cornelius, now thoroughly familiar with his duties, was with Surgeon Milius attending sick line one morning, when Max drew near and awaited an opportunity for a private word with him. Cornelius noted the presence of the dapper ex-*couturier*, and impatiently watched the dwindling line and marked off the result of the rapid fire diagnosis.

A tottering Cambodian, yellow as saffron and with a high temperature, was slated for hospital. A giant Senegalese, as black as the heart of an ebony log, displayed a maturing carbuncle and was rewarded with light duty until the pressure on hospital facilities lessened.

"What have we here?" the surgeon muttered as one of the men in line cried out sharply and fell to the ground, where he lay frothing at the mouth and writhing.

Calmly Milius surveyed the fellow. Coolly he stooped over and dabbed at the froth with a bit of cotton. He sniffed at this and then smiled.

"Mark this man full duty," he directed Cornelius, "together with punishment for malingering."

Cornelius made the entry and watched with some amusement the miraculous recovery of the "apoplectic" who yearned for hospital fare and comforts.

"Always these fit simulators use the soap," Milius commented as he probed a swollen forearm of the next man for a poisonous splinter. He found it and dipped his forceps in the pink solution at his elbow. "Why they usually select a perfumed soap is beyond me," he commented further.

At length the end of the line was reached and the last case disposed of.

The *médecin-chef* now stepped from the shadow of the penitentiary wall. A green sun umbrella over his head, he made off toward the gates. No sooner was the gaunt white figure beyond earshot than Cornelius turned eagerly to Max.

"You have news for me?" he asked.

Max nodded.

"How is the cooking over in the Rue Voltaire?" he inquired, as he glanced cautiously around to make certain that no one was within earshot.

"Excellent," Cornelius rejoined.

"Your time draws near," Max proceeded. "It will not be long now before a certain fruit steamer is due at Cayenne. A few among us know the captain very well. He has helped more than one wretch to escape from this hell hole, and he will help you. The steamer touches at Colon and Havana, and then proceeds directly to New York. This captain is Link No. 4 of our underground chain of communication. You will meet the other links very shortly. I heard only yesterday from Link No. 3 at Cayenne. She will be ready and waiting for you, and will hide you until the sailing of the steamer. Patience, *mon ami*, and all will be well."

As Max would have turned away, Cornelius detained him.

"I can't for the life of me see why you should do so much for me," he said. "Of course I want to be free, and I'll take advantage of any opportunity of escape. Aren't you taking chances on your own account? Don't you think you've done enough for me already?"

"No," Max answered. "I have heard your story. I believe you. You are not the man to commit the crime of which you are convicted. And even if you were guilty, it would not matter. As for my own poor self, and as for your saving me from the river, I don't mind saying that it might have been just as well for me and the world at large if you had not interfered. But you did. You will be repayed—generously, I hope, and very soon. Do not worry about me and my connection with your forthcoming liberation. I can take care of myself."

A cryptic smile, an airy wave of his hand, Max turned on the heel of his neatly pipe clayed shoe.

All that white hot day and far into the sweltering night Cornelius listened to the music within him—music audible to him alone. "Freedom is coming!" was the motif of the melody. "Freedom is coming!" he sang loudly—though no man heard. Radiant of face, the happiest man in the three Guianas, he went about his duties.

Jean Tabac-Pot noted early the ecstatic expression on his hut mate's face. At first he was puzzled by it, then pleased, as he reasoned:

"This new fellow is helping himself to the morphine of Milius. He can not last."

Next morning, standing near his hut at the very edge of the jungle, Cornelius mulled over the information Max had given him.

Oceanward, from beyond the mouth of the Maroni, the sun rose, a molten ball from a boiling sea. It stabbed through frond of palm and leaf of mangrove, and sounds of day began. The drone of the wild bee came to the ears of the prisoner who stood gazing southward as though there were no rank green barrier to his vision. Crane flies buzzed softly. A thousand yards away, a cayman, disturbed by some unseen intruder, splashed awkwardly but rapidly into the jungle stained waters. The sun climbed higher. The cicada now took up its staccato song, to hold it throughout the heat of the August day.

Good days and evil days were lived over by Cornelius during this half hour before sick line should form. And now he reviewed a dream of the night. Some brain cell had reacted to Max's mention of a steamer, and as he slept he saw himself standing on the bridge of a dream ship. Above him, black smoke was vomiting from the twin funnels of the ship. And below him on its fiddley, cooling while they rested from their toil beneath decks, sat a row of stokers, sweat towels knotted loosely around their shoulders. He turned his head, to see slightly to starboard the jagged skyline of New York. Directly ahead of him, Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty loomed high above the dipping and rising prow.

A quavering call broke into the reviewing of his dream, and Cornelius sought the kitchen for his morning coffee, poured by the black hands of the Martiniquaise cook. Jean Tabac-Pot was just ahead of him, and had broken off for himself the bigger part of the morning ring of *brioche*. Yet, to Cornelius, never before had breakfast tasted sweeter.

A steamship was due at Cayenne! And soon he would be free. What mattered a paltry bit of *brioche* filched by a fellow *relégué?* What mattered the filth of the morning sick line? The 108° of Fahrenheit marked by the silvery thread of mercury on the Milius veranda?

CHAPTER VII

LINK NO. 2

LINK NO. 2 in the underground chain of communication between the convicts of St. Laurent du Maroni and the outside world was Hannibal, halfbreed pilot and helmsman of the official seagoing launch which made irregular trips to Cayenne with mail, dispatches and officials on leaves of absence. Cheap and flashy jewelry was Hannibal's weakness, and this particular September morning as he lolled on a cockpit cushion of the waiting launch he surveyed with some satisfaction the pseudo-emeralds and blood-red "rubies" which gleamed on his slim but muscular brown fingers.

Before night fell he would have a fresh acquisition, he mused; also he would see again the golden crowned queen—so imperial, so generous—who reigned at the house near the far end of the Rue Glorieux in the city of Cayenne.

As he waited for the civilian butcher and a guard from the coffin shop, cronies on their way for a monthly carousal in the city, Hannibal smiled craftily to himself as he reviewed his profitable connection with this woman. He knew by sight the next fellow booked for freedom: the tall, narrow hipped man who worked for Sur-

geon Milius. Soon there would be an escape in the night. And he, Hannibal, would be the means of that escape, for already he had picked out the bush negro who would conduct the fleeing prisoner down the coast and over the marshes at the back of Cayenne Island.

A shadow fell on the pilot. A convict runner tossed to him the official mail bag. Now figures came down the dock—the guard and butcher, the officer in command of the launch.

Last of all came Link No. 1, in the person of Max the ex-*couturier*, permitted full liberty in St. Laurent, but denied the pleasures of Cayenne save on special command of madame the wife of the governor-general.

Conspicuous in his hand Max bore a bulky manila envelop, which he handed carefully yet openly to Hannibal.

"Match these samples and fetch the cloth back with you," the latter was directed.

Hannibal thrust the envelop into a capacious pocket of his cotton breeches and turned stolidly for his signal. The guard gave it. In the tiny engine room of the craft a gong clanged and the launch quivered to the thrust of propeller against amber waters.

A quarter of an hour later the river's mouth was passed. Hannibal now ported his helm and headed directly for Cayenne, six hours away. Breasting a sluggish sea, the launch rolled on and on, a monotonous coastline of rank green on one hand, the monotonous steel-blue waters of the wide South Atlantic on the other. At length, far away over the port bow, the dim specks of the three Iles de Salut—St. Joseph, Royale, and Diable—were distinguished, and not long thereafter Cayenne's Citadel and Jesuit College loomed against the horizon directly ahead.

Skilfully the jeweled fingers of Hannibal spun the polished spokes of the wheel, and soon they were at dock and made fast. Guard and passengers lost no time in mounting the ladder to the walk above, and presently Hannibal found himself at liberty until early next morning, when the return to St. Laurent would be begun. It was yet early afternoon as he set forth along the almost deserted alleys and cobbled streets, for Cayenne was still at its midday siesta.

In a dark corner of the post office Hannibal fulfilled a part of his duties as link of the underground chain, extracting unobserved several stamped missives from the manila envelop Max had handed to him. These he mailed. One pinkish envelop bearing neither stamp nor superscription, he tucked carefully away, and then set forth. A pleasurable errand was now his. He was to call upon Link No. 3 at her café-cabaret.

At the rear of this café, the Coq d'Or, one scraggly palm touched with shade the sun scorched flagstones of a walled patio. An iron gate afforded entrance from the hot cobbles of the Rue Glorieux, and here Hannibal entered. He approached the screen door of the kitchen and knocked softly. A native girl, dark of eye, lustrous of hair, responded and grinned widely at his presence.

"Cimiénne," breathed Hannibal in soft Galibis, "tell the lady of the sun kissed hair that all is ready, and that I bear a message from St. Laurent."

"Enter, clever one," Cimiénne bade him.

She found a chair for him in a corner and paused long enough to pour a cooling drink.

"Business is good," she said as she fetched treasured ice and a bowl of sugar. "Madame Julie is caroling like unto the black oriole of the Sinnamarie jungle. I will fetch her to you."

"She is fairer even than the purple throated *cotinga* of our uplands," Hannibal added before turning thirstily to his drink. "May her business always be good."

From the big room beyond the connecting pantry, summoned by the adoring maid of all work, the buxom Madame Julie entered. Eagerly she seized the pinkish envelop and read the brief contents of a note penned early that morning by Max. He understood thoroughly the

plan she was about to put in action. He was ready. His friend was ready.

Madame Julie finished reading and turning to the pilot, probed him with questions.

At length, satisfied that he knew his rôle and would not fail her, she desisted and handed him two gold pieces.

It was the largest sum the brown fellow had ever possessed. It seemed a fairy tale that in the fullness of time more gold would follow. Verily a fine ring would gleam on each and every one of his fingers.

The interview was over. Kindly words issued from madame's lips, and in a daze Hannibal lingered until she had passed from his sight.

He turned to Cimiénne.

"Lucky girl thou art," he said, "to serve such a beautiful one. She is creamy fair like the young kingfisher. Her voice is that of the night heron when the moon is at its full."

Softly the screen door closed behind him and, clasping his new riches, Hannibal took his leave. There was yet much for him to do in Cayenne. Late that night he was to call again at this house near the far end of the Rue Glorieux.

CHAPTER VIII

LINK NO. 3

PROBABLY never before and, in all likelihood, never again, will a colonial city of France possess an establishment boasting the virtues of the Coq d'Or in Cayenne. There one could dine at ease to the distant strains of a military band playing in the dusty Place, or one could sip iced drinks to the drone of electric fans, while thumbing over the last number of *L'Illustration* or *La Vie Parisienne.* In the evenings which fell fast on the heels of the tropic dusk, gaiety reigned and dancing was in order.

The Coq d'Or, a pronounced success dating from its gala opening, was for neither the rich nor the poor; neither the military man nor the civilian. All were welcome, provided only that they paid their moderate scores and stood on their good behavior.

On this latter point the hostess was adamant. Madame Julie, talented, reputedly rich, and of mysterious influence, saw to it from the beginning that there were no *cabinets particuliers* connected with her café, no curtained booth or intriguing alcove. All was regular and in order, from the drums of reveille until the last light was out. There was liberty but no license. Visitors looking for the sordid, drunkards and heavy handed fellows loose of tongue and morals, soon found their mistake, and trespassed no more on the premises of the Coq d'Or.

And so all concerned prospered. From a mere cabaret-café the Coq d'Or had developed into an institution. Officers from the staff of the governor-general might be found there on gala nights, when from a raised platform special entertainment was offered.

As for Madame Julie, despite bleached hair and plump maturity, she was far from unattractive. Many years of battling a man made world had not embittered her. It had but ripened her to a fuller understanding, had nourished seeds of tolerance into vines of goodly growth. Thus hatred and envy had etched few telltale lines on her face. The futility of tears and inactive wishing had been impressed upon her years before. She saw good mixed with the evil in every man and woman, in every living creature. From the naive bud of a girl who had bent timid footsteps toward Paris she had become an expatriate, a full blown flower as it were, attracting, as the wild vanilla of the jungle draws the bee swarms, all manner and sorts of men.

And so she moved among her patrons at the Coq d'Or, a smile of welcome for one and all, be he mere rubber bleeder in high laced boots, or officer of rank from the Citadel.

It was during the early days of the Coq d'Or that Colonel Adrien Molyneux of the governor-general's staff became a daily visitor to the resort. Suave and

sophisticated was Molyneux, his uniforms always starched and immaculate, his triangular beard invariably clipped and brushed with meticulous care. Whenever he could appropriate the company of the hostess, he did so, because they were at ease with each other, and Madame Julie attached no blame to him for his lack of medals.

The colonel's weakness was absinthe. The skeleton in his closet was his war-record. Through no fault of his own, he had taken an inglorious part in the Great War. Madagascar alone had seen the colonel, then a captain, throughout the bitter years of conflict. The taunt *embusqué* was whispered even now behind his immaculate back—a whisper that would follow him while life lasted.

This particular summer had been a hard one.

Torrid days and nights scarcely more bearable, fused into blistering weeks. There was no rain now, and Cayenne was a filthy hole in which man, woman and beast suffered and quarreled among themselves. With the exception of the thick walled Citadel and the massive structure —once a monastery—in which the governor-general dwelt and had his offices, there were few buildings in town offering an escape from the vertical rays of the sun.

This night, following Pilot Hannibal's visit, Madame Julie and Molyneux sat together at table. It was a memorable evening for the Coq d'Or, for not only were the three Guianas represented, but officers and men were there from a French cruiser and two cargo steamers. Fast and furious the fun went on, marked by an occasional interruption when men were made to learn there was a sharp deadline drawn between liberty and impropriety.

These interruptions were distressing, but strong fellows among her regular customers obviated the necessity of calling in the police, and by midnight the noisy ones had been cleared out and supported back to their vessels.

"What a truly cosmopolitan place you have here," Colonel Molyneux remarked to Julie.

"It would seem so," Madame Julie rejoined, "particularly tonight." She glanced meaningly at an adjoining table where a bearded and big paunched Dutch ornithologist from Paramaribo was playing dominoes with a lean faced Britisher from Georgetown. "There is Holland and England," she added.

Molyneux's eyes roved around the room. Cello and harp were silent. The musicians had gone home. Complying with a police regulation, dancing had ceased promptly at midnight. Yet there was still a profitable amount of business going on. In one corner a gold seeking adventurer down from the headwaters of the Maroni was regaling one of the waitresses with tales of a hard won pouch of dust and small nuggets. At another table nearby a French naval lieutenant and the master of a Yankee tramp steamer were discoursing on great circle sailing and the latest wrinkles in sonic deep sea sounding.

Monotonously the blades of the fans revolved overhead. One by one, two by two, the paying guests departed. Among the last to go was the captain of the cargo steamer, who, once during the evening, had spoken privately with Madame Julie. At length Molyneux and Julie were left alone. Presently Cimiénne entered, tray in hand, and placed unbidden a glass of cold water before her mistress.

It was a signal. Slowly Madame Julie sipped the water, and then rose.

"Just another *petit verre?*" the colonel inquired politely, simultaneously rising. "And how about a little drive around the island?" he added. "I am lonesome."

Madame Julie concealed a yawn.

"It is late," she said. "We have been very busy, and I must go early to market."

Gently but firmly she detached the colonel's arm from about her waist, but suffered him to kiss her fingertips.

"You are a poem of the flesh," the officer breathed. "One of these evenings I shall find you not tired, and shall bear you away on the cushions of the finest car on Cayenne Island."

Madame Julie made fitting rejoinder

and reluctantly her guest took his leave. All but one light in the big room was now extinguished, and Madame Julie passed through the swinging service door and the pantry beyond.

In a corner of the dimly lighted kitchen Hannibal, the pilot, sat awaiting her. And in the pale moonlight of the patio beyond, a nearly naked bush negro crouched with stoic indifference to the insects of the night and the passage of time. Now Cimiénne called softly to him, and he entered the presence of one whom Hannibal had described as a goddess.

And now this goddess smiled on him and handed him beautiful trinkets and a bolt of gorgeous calico.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOG

COINCIDENT with the departure of the launch for St. Laurent next morning, a native sailing *pirogue* slipped out of the marshes at the rear of Cayenne Island and stole along the coast. All that day and far into the night its lone occupant alternately sailed and paddled his seaworthy but clumsy craft; beaching it eventually a mile below the government wharf at St. Laurent.

Sunrise found a black man squatting in front of the store of a Chinese purveyor of fruits and sweets and canned supplies, and thirty minutes later Hannibal passed. No words were exchanged, but within an hour Max had been apprised that all was ready for a "departure."

Cornelius, on his way from hospital with morning reports, was met by the ex-*couturier* and given the final details.

"You know the path through the bamboos?" Max asked. "And the clump of mangroves at the river's edge?"

Cornelius nodded. Long, long ago the spot had been selected.

"There will be a moon," Max went on, "and the earlier you can get away, the better."

"After Tabac-Pot falls asleep."

For some few seconds, each busy with his own thoughts, the two men stood face to face in the center of the wretched Avenue de la Republique.

Cornelius was truly grateful to this fop who wore habitually a mask of careless gaiety—this prison trusty whom woman's vanity had given privilege and place far above his fellows.

"Max," Cornelius said at length, "you'll not find me ungrateful. If I get through all right I'll send you a letter and an address. Write me and I'll do anything I can for you."

Max twirled his pongee sunshade. A wistful expression crossed his face, wiping from it all trace of smirk or insincerity.

"You do not understand, my friend," he said softly. "Know you that I am of Paris—born there, bred there, and *died* there. Any other place on the footstool of God—rather this football of God—would be equally as unendurable as this Guiana. Long ago I could have escaped to France. But what would I gain? I am too well known. I am marked—" his forefinger touched the scar—"I would be retaken and given the double chains. I would lose my privileges, my clientele."

"Perhaps, in New York—in America," Cornelius ventured, but was cut short.

"A land of vulgarity and the poisonous products of prohibition! A land of barbarian cookery and beautiful women chained to impossible men. A nation branded with the mark of the dollar."

Cornelius might have explained that all Americans were not cast in the same mold, but held his tongue. Inadvertently he had touched upon a tender spot, for Max, his voice again lowered, his eyes fixed upon a spot in the blue sky far across the reaches of the shimmering jungle, proceeded to call up memories of the city where he had "died."

"Can you see Longchamps, my American friend? Can you hear the programs rustling in the great stands? Can you see the crowds pouring out of the Metro at Porte-Maillot? Can you see the press photographers snapping the new crea-

tions? And in the evening, on the Boulevards—the soft lights and perfumed air? —the orderly gaiety on every hand!"

His nostrils quivering, his eyes about to fill, the man of Paris broke off abruptly and turned to Cornelius.

"I bore you," he said. "Pray forgive me." The mask had fallen. Insouciant, almost with a patronizing air, he held out his hand.

"I'll not be seeing you any more; so I'll say *bonne chance!*"

Silently Cornelius shook the limp hand of the other, and then each went about his business.

Seemingly, to Cornelius, that day was endless. The torturing sun apparently stood still in the heavens; the harsh shrill note of the cicada was a portent that time had ceased in its march, and that night would never come.

At last, however, the screeching insects stopped their maddening song. St. Laurent du Maroni roused from its siesta. The afternoon shortened. Westward, toward the invisible Andes, the blood-red sun dropped behind the mauve and purple Tumac-Humac range, and night fell.

It was the last meal he would eat as a prisoner, Cornelius reflected as he sat that evening in the Milius kitchen, scarcely touching the tempting fare which the good natured Martiniquaise had set before him. Venison had been brought in from the mountains, but it meant little to Cornelius. Idly, his thoughts on this night of adventure, he sat across table from Tabac-Pot, who was noisily and greedily at work on his chop and mug of *ordinaire.*

One last view Cornelius had of the kindly Milius, seated in his screened study, his white head bent over the latest additions to his collection, and then he made his way to his hut. Tabac-Pot was there ahead of him, rolling shaggy caporal into a supply of cigarets for the morrow. Cornelius glanced carelessly at him. Leisurely he then undressed and sought his bunk.

A fever was on him as he felt beneath the coarse sheet the suit of plain linen which Max had provided, but it was a fever of impatience and rebellion against the thought that he must lie quietly there for perhaps two hours.

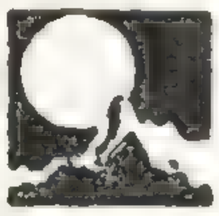
His eyes closed, yet with every nerve and fiber a-tingle, he lay passive and with an effort succeeded in breathing rhythmically. He heard the final movements of Tabac-Pot: the rustle of cigaret papers, the thump of the tobacco filled skull as Jean placed it on the shelf. Now the light was out and moonbeams filtered through the screens.

Faintly from the direction of town, a bugle sounded the last call of the day. Far distant in the jungle, a piano bird caught up the final notes and answered with crazy music all its own. Staccato and shrill, the metallic song stirred the forest near at hand. Spider monkeys squealed a protest from their lairs, while from high among the liana vines parakeets screamed their displeasure to an indifferent and half grown moon.

At length the uproar ceased, and but for the night chorus of jungle insects, a normal quietness prevailed. Tabac-Pot fell fast asleep, his head pillowed on a hairy forearm. Presently a gentle snore came from his bunk. Still Cornelius waited, for it was not yet eleven o'clock, and on the edge of town some Lothario among the prison guards might point an electric torch his way.

The church clock tolled the hour. Off toward the barracks a dog barked in the distance. Now, moving noiselessly, Cornelius slipped from his bunk and donned the hidden suit.

Simultaneously Tabac-Pot woke, stung to sensibility by some vagrant insect. After the manner of hunted men and beasts, he lay motionless while glancing stealthily about him.



THE MOON was higher now, and cast a strong light sufficient to show the watcher that his hut mate was up to something unusual. Silently, unsuspectingly, Cornelius picked up his shoes and stepped outside.

Tabac-Pot was fully awake now.

Quickly he stepped into his own pants and blouse and prepared to follow. If this American was off to steal morphine from the surgeon's private stores, he would catch him in the act. Were he faring forth to keep a midnight tryst, he, Jean Tabac-Pot, would glimpse the woman. Curiously enough, the thought of witnessing an escape did not occur to the fellow at the moment. Peering through the screen on the side of the villa, he saw the American stooping in the shadows, doubtless to lace his shoes. Later, Tabac-Pot saw the outline of a figure passing noiselessly down the mowed grass of the front lawn.

The gate swung open, then closed again. Keeping at a distance—a distance so great that at times the object of his pursuit vanished utterly from his sight—Tabac-Pot followed.

On and on Cornelius proceeded cautiously. He kept to the shadows, and before darting across a moon bathed street, paused to listen and survey the route before him. Now and then he looked behind and listened intently. But he saw no man, nor heard footsteps.

He reached the path through the bamboos. Now he breathed more freely. The river mist hung thinly here, the pale moonlight sifting through from above abundantly enough to guide him. Presently, ghostly in the opalescent mist, the three mangroves appeared.

Cornelius halted here and whistled softly. Almost instantly a blanketed form stole from the deeper shadows and led the way to the river's bank. Fugitive and guide entered the *pirogue*, its warp was cast off, and then the black fellow laid aside his cotton blanket and grasped a paddle. Downstream they moved in the cooling mist, ignorant of watching eyes on the bank behind them. Stoutly, with long firm strokes, the bush negro plied his blade, urging the unwieldly canoe toward the river's mouth and the open sea. Meanwhile, glowing with an unholy joy, Tabac-Pot ran to spread the alarm.

Toward midstream, where the current gave greatest aid, the savage now directed the course of the *pirogue*. Cornelius glimpsed faint lights gleaming dimly through the haze off to port, and knew they marked Albina, an outpost on the Dutch side of the Maroni. They were making good progress. Slowly these lights slipped by and vanished. They were alone, on a great river, with nothing tangible on either hand save the fog wraiths floating above and around, veiling the silver of the moon. On and on the canoe moved in a ghostly silence broken only by the lapping of waters and the soft swish of paddle thrust.

A feeling of security came over the fugitive. As he leaned back in comfort in the stern of the craft he viewed with satisfaction the long mast running amidships, its sail draped loosely over it, one end imprisoned beneath a rude thwart forward, the other extending far outboard over the stern. With such a mast stepped, with sail hoisted to a kindly wind, Cayenne would soon be reached.

Suddenly, shattering the stillness which hung about them, a deep pitched whistle bellowed in the night. Cornelius, roused from his dreaming, sat erect. He knew that whistle too well. It was atop the saw mill where he had endured months of torturing labor. Its sounding at night meant mutiny or escape. Every sleeping guard would arm himself and proceed to a designated post. All launches would be manned. Perhaps the river would be scoured.

As yet he had not connected the night alarm with his own leavetaking.

"Some poor devil has made a break from the Penitentiary," he conjectured, and then turned to the guide, who had stopped paddling and now sat listening.

"That's not for us," Cornelius said. "They'll not miss me before sunrise at the earliest." He spoke in simplest French.

An unintelligible grunt came from the bush negro. He did not understand. Further questioning convinced the fugitive that his guide knew none other than the tongue of his kind. It was awkward. But unquestionably he had been thor-

oughly instructed and knew what was expected of him. That was all that counted. Cornelius turned to look astern.

Simultaneously with his movement came the audible *put-put* of a marine motor not far distant upstream. With the passing of each second the sound grew louder. Now the black man plied his paddle and swung the prow of the canoe so as to head away from the course of the oncoming launch. Cornelius looked in vain for another paddle. There was none. He sat erect, with folded arms and jaw set tensely, staring into the mist and asking himself what possibly could have happened to bring on this pursuit.

Louder grew the roar of the chaser's exhaust. A thick finger of light reached out and pierced the mist to port. Now it swung ahead, a cone of veiled brilliance sweeping an arc. Slowly the light crept toward them, found them and bathed them in its deadly rays.

Instinctively Cornelius reached out and drew his companion to the bottom of the *pirogue*. He knew the custom prevailing of shooting down fleeing prisoners, and looked for immediate gunfire. It came. Beneath the searchlight a series of yellow flashes pricked the haze as a machine gun vomited hot metal.

The gunnery was good. Splinters flew. The *pirogue* shivered at the impact. Score upon score of steel jacketed slugs bit pieces out of the gunwales, tore great patches from the exposed length of furled sail, or else buried themselves inches deep in the fire hardened hull. Almost any other species of craft would have filled and gone to the bottom. But the *pirogue*, thick as a cruiser from its round bottom to a point well above its waterline, rolled in comparative safety to the lifting swells at the Maroni's mouth. Likewise in safety its two occupants hugged the floor.

With the burst of fire, the engine of the launch had been stopped. Now a hoarse voice called for slow speed ahead, for already the *pirogue* had drifted all but out of range of the searchlight, ineffective in the thickening fog. But there was delay in the restarting of the launch. Its engine stopped on dead center, its machinist worked frantically with bar and crank. Precious seconds passed—and to those seconds Cornelius and his guide owed their lives.

Vainly the launch held on, circling and backing, attempting to pick up with its probing finger of light two dead men drifting in a native canoe. Eventually, at a point where the warm waters of the Maroni mingled with the cooler brine of the open South Atlantic, a thick fog prevailed and the hunt was given up.

Fainter and fainter became the beating of the launch propeller until nothing was heard but the jovial slap of ocean against the stout sides of the *pirogue*. Long before, the two men had raised their heads to the caress of the off shore night wind, and in time to witness one of nature's phenomena. For sternmost to the fore, the canoe had drifted across a bar and through a wall of fog, and was floating now on open waters darkly violet. Overhead, the young moon rode its way among the stars.

Humble words of thanksgiving found their way to the lips of Cornelius as he stood bareheaded under the stars, leaning to the roll of the canoe at the surge of the broad Atlantic. Meekly he turned to help the black guide shoulder up the mast. Together they stepped it and hauled out the foot of the sail. It filled and drew. Slowly the prow of the canoe swung around and pointed down the coast.

Over the starboard bow of the rising and dipping *pirogue*, high above the wall of fog which hid the coast, the Southern Cross burned brightly. Beneath it Cayenne slumbered.

CHAPTER X

JAGUAR'S MILK

TWO GUARDS connected with the local prison at Cayenne sat over their dominoes and coffee at the Coq d'Or, idling away the time which must elapse before the midday drums summoned the relieving shift. One of

them spoke briefly of the attempted escape from St. Laurent the day before. Cimiénne, passing at the moment, overheard a phrase and carried the word to her mistress.

Madame Julie, ensconsed at the cashier's desk near the door, received the news coolly. Presently she signaled for one of the girls to relieve her. Calmly then she moved about the café, greeting, as was her habit, each one of her patrons. There were few of them at the time, and soon she was at the table of the prison guards.

"Again we have a hot day," she said smilingly, bestowing on each of them in turn a bright glance.

Would madame have a cooling drink? Would she join them in a *petit verre* of her choice? Madame would—and did. Dominoes were forgotten and swept aside. It was an honor and signal privilege to have the hostess at table with them. Cursed were the noonday drums about to beat!

"Any startling news?" she inquired presently, steeling her tone to a languid indifference.

"Four deaths at St. Jean; two deaths on Ile Joseph," one of the men volunteered.

"More smallpox at Sinnamarie," the other supplemented.

"Nothing ever happens at St. Laurent," Madame Julie hazarded carelessly. Between thumb and forefinger she rolled the stem of her thin goblet.

"*Au contraire*, there was an escape from that *dépot*, night before last," the first guard now remembered.

Faster and faster the goblet oscillated.

"Rather there was an attempted escape," the second guard corrected, "for the *déporté* and his companion were shot into pieces near the mouth of the Maroni before they could reach the sea."

Diluted *cassis* splashed from the goblet and became a purple pool on the white marble of the table.

"If the fool had tried the jungle across the river," the guard continued, "he might have made Paramaribo."

"They're always caught or shot when they make for the sea," the other added.

Little more was known. No boat had reached Cayenne from St. Laurent since the attempt, and only the bare facts had come in over the wireless to the palace of the governor-general.

Abruptly the conversation changed from prison escapes to the matter of the correct time. The roll of the drums settled this, and immediately the guards buckled their belts and hastened away.

A shrug of her shoulders, a pang in her matronly bosom, and Madame Julie went about her noonday duties. Later, luncheon over, she retired to her room to take her usual siesta. It was hard not to be able in this instance to help out her dear friend Max, she mused as she lay on her bed. Max had been the "grand figure" of her Parisian days. She loved him then. She loved him now. Willingly she had acted as a link in the underground chain, and on several occasions dipped into her own fat purse in order to facilitate the passage of certain deserving prisoners along the road which led to liberty. It was doubly hard in this case, for Max had assured her that the American was not only unquestionably an innocent man, but had saved his life.

It took Madame Julie longer than usual to fall asleep.

The pitiless sun crept westward and sank behind the hills. Night fell quickly. Outside the Coq d'Or lights gleamed against the blackness, while in the café a score of incandescent bulbs glowed and shed soft brilliance on polished floor and table-top. The musicians arrived.

Yet in Madame Julie's chamber all was dark. Faint sounds filtered up to her from below: carefree laughter, the throb of sweet music, the tinkle of glasses. She was needed downstairs. But what mattered it? She was still drowsy. She would doze for another ten minutes.

Five of those minutes passed, and Cimiénne entered and aroused her.

"Come down, madame," she said. "The American is safe!"

Slowly Madame Julie wakened and looked into the lustrous eyes of the native maid. Cimiénne, with tremulous lips,

repeated her words and added particulars. The bush negro had appeared in the patio. She had talked with him. He had just come in over the marsh jungle at the rear of the island. The *déporté* was concealed there in a native hut. He would come in as soon as possible after midnight, when all was silent. Bullets had not touched him, and all was well.

Presently Madame Julie knew all Cimiénne knew. The American and the guide had been fired upon, but had escaped in the thickening fog.

CUSTOMERS were few that evening. The hours passed slowly. Midnight came at last. Cellist and harpist drew the covers over their instruments and stood waiting for their weekly pay. Madame Julie viewed with satisfaction the thinning crowd and busied herself turning out unnecessary lights. Presently all had departed, save Colonel Molyneux, to whom Cimiénne had just served a drink.

"Come and join me, madame," he invited the hostess.

Speaking from the cashier's desk, she answered:

"I'm sorry, *mon Colonel*, I'm closing up. I'm not feeling well and would sleep."

"Have one or two of these and you'll feel better."

Molyneux indicated the drink before him. Madame Julie saw that he was dripping an absinthe. Cold water was trickling from a silver cone, disintegrating the cube of beet sugar suspended beneath it, falling at last into the cloudy mixture in the goblet.

"Why do you persist," she asked, drawing near, "in drinking Pernod after dinner? You know it isn't good for you."

Molyneux shrugged his shoulders.

"After a long hard day," he said, "there is nothing better than a glass or two of jaguar's milk."

He laughed as her brows went up.

"Never heard it called that before?"

Absent mindedly she shook her head. Her thoughts were elsewhere. Cimiénne had vanished through the pantry door. And now Madame Julie imagined she heard the soft opening and closing of the screen door between kitchen and patio. The American was due! It might be—

Molyneux's white sleeved arm cut short her thoughts. It stole forth and drew her gently but firmly to a chair beside him. No protest came from her, for at this juncture she glimpsed Cimiénne peering through the pantry doorway, one brown forefinger laid across her lips, the other pointing upward at the floor above.

Madame Julie understood. The American had arrived. Cimiénne would take him up the back stairs and show him into the room next her's—the room where he would hide until the sailing of the fruit steamer now loading.

"In Algeria," Molyneux rumbled on, "they call it lion's milk. It makes one strong and full of courage, like the lion."

Mechanically, with no plan yet formed for getting rid of her guest, Madame Julie watched him as he removed the dripping device and drank deeply of the opalescent mixture. She listened intently for sounds from the rear staircase, from the corridor above. But none came.

"In Indo-China," Molyneux proceeded, flattering himself that she was interested, "it is called *lait du tigré*, because it gives one the cunning and tireless energy of the tigress. And here in Cayenne we call it jaguar's milk—not that the jaguar can be compared with the lion or tiger."

Molyneux turned from his glass to find Madame Julie listening; but not to him. Her eyes were fixed on the ceiling. And even as he turned, sounds came to him as of a casement window being opened above, of subdued voices, one of them of deeper pitch than that of the normal female.

Suspicious by nature, Molyneux studied the listening woman, and when presently she turned to him he thought he detected an anxious look on her features. Quite obviously she had something on her mind. Perhaps there was a man upstairs. By rights the chambers on the second floor

were sacred to the female help of the Coq d'Or.

"What is going on upstairs?" he asked, a quizzical grin on his flushed features.

"Not a thing in the world, *mon Colonel,*" she answered coolly and without hesitation. But there was that in her poise which heaped fuel on the fire of Molyneux's suspicion.

"Jaguar's milk" has a way all its own with the human mind. It boiled in Colonel Adrien Molyneux, giving forth those vapors which alternately soothe and irritate. Half formed ideas based on false premises dissolved one after the other on the screen of his imagination. His power grew. Woman has a reputation for possessing unbridled curiosity. There are times when man can rival woman in being keen to know how, why and where. Such a moment came now to Adrien Molyneux. It was disquieting to think that a cabaret woman could put anything over on the second most powerful man in Cayenne. He could easily find out what was going on upstairs. Madame Julie was his friend. He would not harm her, nor see her harmed, but he would soon know her secret.

He reached forth and finished his glass. The plan grew and attained perfection. He would stop for a moment at military police headquarters. He arose and found his swagger stick and gold vizored cap.

"I must be off," he said, "and I'm sorry if I've kept you from your bed."

A wave of relief swept over Madame Julie. Cordially she bade him good night and to call again. She stood at the door and listened as he strode away in the semi-darkness over the rough cobbles of the Rue Glorieux. One long comprehensive glance she gave around. She glimpsed the low hanging moon, outdone in brilliance by the polished jewels of the Southern Cross. The hot night wind passed by and stirred her bleached hair.

She closed the door softly and locked it. She put out the light and sought the stairs.

CHAPTER XI

THE RAID

CORNELIUS, between mouthfuls of food and drink, gave a short history of himself to the buxom angel who now sat near him continually replenishing his plate and cup until he could eat no more. She, in turn, spoke in glowing terms of Max, touching briefly upon a friendship established in Paris long before the outbreak of the Great War. Max was, indeed, a man among men. His conviction for a crime of passion, the crime itself, was a freak of life—of life packed with the tragic, the unexpected, the fortuitous. Such awful things had happened to the high, to the lowly. They would happen again.

At last they fell to discussing the plan. Madame Julie told of the fruit steamer so soon to sail northward, perhaps tomorrow night. Its master was her friend. More than one *déporté* he had taken with him to freedom "under the bananas" to New Orleans and New York.

"No one but Cimiénne knows you are here," she said. "All you have to do is to remain here quietly. Your food will be brought to you."

Higher climbed the pale moon outside the room where Madame Julie and Cornelius sat conversing. It looked down on tiled rooftop and patio; on dusty Place and cobbled street. It looked down on the shadowy forms of men swarming front and rear around the inn near the far end of the Rue Glorieux.

Presently came the clink of a latch; a hoarse call; a hammering on the door.

"What can it mean?" Madame Julie asked, as more noise came from below and sounds of confusion were heard in neighboring rooms.

She crossed the room swiftly and opened the door. Soft footsteps came pattering up the stairs and along the corridor. Madame Julie stepped out. Cimiénne, barefoot and with unbound hair flying wildly, faced her.

"The police!" she warned. "The military police!"

Cornelius heard the words and crossed quickly to the window. As booted feet were heard on the stairs, as doors along the corridor were opened and held ajar, he peered beneath the shade. He saw armed men below. In that direction there was no way of escape. He was trapped, and with no living chance to fight his way to freedom.

Developments came quickly. Lights flashed in the hallway. Madame Julie barred the way of the advancing men.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" she demanded of the sergeant leader.

"I'm sorry, madame," he answered. "I have orders to search these premises for contraband tobacco, unstamped cigarets, or fugitives from justice. I have no choice but to obey."

The fellow was polite, but he spoke with an air of finality which would brook neither delay nor interference.

"Whose orders?" came icily from Madame Julie.

"That I can not say. They were passed on to me." Abruptly the speaker turned to his men and ordered a search of each room.

An uproar followed—a babble of sound marked by hysterical laughter and angry protest.

Two men entered the room of Cornelius, to find him standing erect with set jaw and folded arms. To resist would be suicidal. He eyed the intruders fearlessly. Tall, slim, burned by the tropic sun, this picture of the fugitive, helpless and at bay, stirred the compassion of the onlooking Madame Julie. She noted that thorns of jungle marsh had torn rents in his apparel. A little thrill of admiration passed over her as she noted further his set jaw and level glance.

Ready for possible resistance, the soldier-policemen closed in. They met none. Then each took an arm and the short march to the stairs began. From the head of the stairs Madame Julie watched Cornelius. One minute she stood alone, Cimiénne hovering in the distance, and then she shrugged her shoulders.

"Of all the nights for a raid," she murmured to herself. "Why in the name of *le bon Dieu* should they select this night?"

Groping her way downstairs, she surveyed the empty café, and stood listening to the diminishing clatter of the departing officers. Then she entered the pantry and, for the first time in many weeks, helped herself to a stiff drink of cognac.

CHAPTER XII

THE HOUSE OF DOUBLE CHAINS

WITHIN the prison gate at St. Laurent du Maroni, not far distant from the hooded guillotine which works just after the sessions of the Maritime Tribunal, stands the grim structure known as the House of Double Chains. Here despairing wretches are held until sentenced by the court for offenses ranging from theft, insubordination and refusal to work, up to the graver charges of attempted escape and murder. Many of the convicts held here by neck and ankle fail to survive until trial week. Stroke of sun, exhaustion and anemia, fever and insanity intervene. Death serves its habeas corpus.

In the offices of *monsieur le directeur* an entry is penned. A bushel of lime is sent down to a pit dug among the nodding bamboos. With the ending of trial week, a semi-annual clearing is made, and the survivors are sent to the punishment camps at St. Jean or Sinnamarie, relegated to solitary confinement on the Ile St. Joseph—or else gum with their life-blood the ponderous blade of "the Widow."

Granting that there is a hell, and that hell has departments, St. Laurent du Maroni may be likened to it, and the House of Double Chains compared with its hottest division.

In such a place, an iron ball locked to his left ankle, lay Cornelius Storm, awaiting trial for his break for liberty. There was a bare plank bed beneath him. His pillow was the iron ball he dragged with him by day while mucking in the hot yellow mud of the irrigation ditches.

And roll or turn as he would during the anguish of his wakeful hours, through the delirium of his dreams, he could not move his right leg. An iron band held this ankle as in a yoke, the ringed ends of it passing through slots cut in the planks. He could move the left leg, hampered though it was with ball and chain, but the fixation of the right ankle each night as the wretches took their positions on the common bed, was all but unbearable.

It was an unnecessary precaution—a barbaric practise come down through the years, and soon to be abolished. It was an ingenious device, whatever may be uttered on the score of its cruelty, for it permitted a single guard to remain outside the house and lock in place twenty-four balled-and-chained prisoners within a prison. A long iron bar worked through a slot. It passed beneath the plank bed, engaging in turn the ringed ends of the ankle-yokes. At the far side of the house the bar could be secured with a padlock.

Blistered hands and peeling face and arms were among the least of the tortures of this bold fellow who had survived a burst of .303's; who had somehow managed to reach Cayenne and secrete himself in an upper room of the gay Coq d'Or. Added to his physical suffering was mental distress on behalf of Max and Madame Julie. Would they be suspected of complicity? Would Madame Julie be deported from Cayenne?

He knew nothing of what went on outside, for here there were no means of communication. Escape was impossible. After the forthcoming trial and the probable penalty of one year in solitary confinement on the Ile St. Joseph, what could he hope to accomplish?

These questions and hundreds of others unanswerable, troubled Cornelius as he stood knee deep in the hot mud by day, as he rolled feverishly on the hard planks by night.

The dormitory where he had first been quartered on entering prison was freedom itself compared with this place, for there one could at least move about unhampered by ball and chain and cruel yoke. There was running water. One could curse or laugh at will. There was Jules la Pêche to watch at his tattooing. There were thumbed and tattered copies of papers and magazines to look at. And one could listen of an evening to raconteurs among the Club of the Deformed as they lived over again the outstanding happenings—grave, gay, terrible—in their checkered lives. The song of the halfwit with the figure tattooed on his semi-bald pate—"Where I go my girl goes with me" —would be sweet music here.

And the villa of Milius, surgeon and butterfly collector, were paradise itself compared with this sweltering lazaret of the damned, where human creatures lay in irons, forbidden free movement of their limbs, denied the privilege of song or oath, to watch with sunken eyes the little squares of ghastly light which stole in from the courtyard where the armed guard paced.

It was a place of moans and whispers, for its occupants were made early to learn that noise would not be tolerated, that a yell of defiance would bring the dreaded "collar and tidbit."

It was during his third week that Cornelius saw this form of restraint used. An ex-sailor had cracked under the strain. Cornelius never learned of what crime he had been convicted, of the reason for his being sent to the House of Double Chains. This evening previous to being locked to the planks, the wretched fellow refused his pan of soup and sat apart. Muttering to himself, he ignored the signal of the guard to take his place and thrust his free ankle in the yoke.

The guards knew well what they were about. Sternly they ordered the other men to their positions. The long bar was slipped through and fastened. And now the door was opened and three husky men entered. They seized the convict and rushed him to his place.

At the first touch of their hands a frenzy possessed the fellow. He raised his voice and reviled France. She was a wanton woman sitting among the nations. The Tricolor of France was a bloody rag fit

only for the basest uses. On and on he raved, while firmly the guards pressed him back and looped his neck with the iron collar. Its ringed ends, like those of the anklets, were thrust through holes in the planking and fastened beneath. Yet the wretch continued his raving.

In the face of it the guards were cool. It was an old story to them.

"Will you have the tidbit?" one of them asked.

Insane defiance burned in the eyes of the prostrate man. He writhed and spat at them. He transferred his abuse now from France to the warders themselves. They were sons of fathers' whose souls were roasting in the nether depths of hell. Their mothers and sisters were outcasts. Their children were—

The entrance of the tidbit cut short the wild utterances. A pair of socks rolled into a ball was forced between the jaws of the blasphemer and bandaged tightly in place. He lay gurgling helplessly.

"Of a verity you would have *la bonne bouche*," one of the guards commented as he shrugged his muscular shoulders.

"See how far you can spit, *mon vieux*," another called before turning away.

There was a silence now—an awful silence relieved only by the faint gurglings of the gagged *déporté*, the soft rustling of winged insects at the high and narrow windows, the occasional clank of chain as some miserable wretch moved his free leg. Presently a hoarse whisper was heard as one of the bolder spirits confirmed the opinion of their comrade respecting the genealogy of the guards. A muttered imprecation came from here and there. Then all sounds were hushed as the guard on duty paused in his measured pacing.

Ghastly dawn followed a night to which Dante alone could have done justice. The long bar grated in its channel. Men sat up and rubbed the numbness from their right ankles. Tin pannikins rattled as the prisoners clustered around the coffee bucket and shared the weak mixture which was at least hot and liquid.

But one man lay still, his open eyes glazed and staring at the ceiling. No prisoner went near him. No guard relieved him of gag or collar. And when, following the call to work, Cornelius picked up his ball and shambled toward his place in the clanking *corvée*, he saw that death had unquestionably served another writ of habeas corpus.

CHAPTER XIII

REVOLT

AT ST. LAURENT DU MARONI the December rain fell heavily. It thundered on roofs of galvanized iron. Less noisily it beat on roofs of tile. The sun had been hidden all day. Now, for a brief space, it hung red on the western horizon, a lurid ball resting on the wet greenery of the jungle.

The last of the work *corvées* splashed along through the yellow mud and entered the prison gates. The sun vanished from sight. Night followed quickly.

In the dormitory where the Club of the Deformed was quartered, an unusual silence prevailed. Quietly the convicts ate their evening ration of soup and rice, and as if by mutual consent clattered neither spoon nor tin. Softly they moved about, their eyes on Necklace, listening at the barred door. At length a rattling sound was heard. It grew louder. It came nearer and nearer, and presently the night guard passed along the corridor on his first inspection tour. Mechanically he tried the door and passed on, ignorant that the man he had booted and spat upon —the man who had sworn to kill him and pay for it under the guillotine—had lurked within arm's length of him.

Now Necklace turned and grinned at his mates.

"Tomorrow night, about this hour," he prophesied, touching the tattooed line of dots at the base of his throat, "monsieur with the keys will find himself short of air."

All eyes were now on Jules the Peach, recognized leader of the inside politicians at St. Laurent, and *président* of the club of maimed and tattooed. He fished

among the rolled garments on his shelf and found the blade of a hacksaw. He fitted this into a narrow frame of stiff wire.

"Now then," he said, approaching the barred door, "let the choir sing."

A soft chanting began, two of the convicts taking the burden of the song, a dozen of the others joining in on chosen lines.

Weird and rhythmic, the words of the *chanson* sifted through the bars and down the corridor past other dormitories where husky voices of broken men were raised in songs of love and hate. "*Pont à Paris,*" came in a clear tenor voice from one chamber; "*Auprès de ma Blonde,*" was sung in another.

Such was the "music hour" at St. Laurent du Maroni, when the *relégués* were permitted to sing—not too loudly—provided song was left in them after the trials of the day.

Now Jules the Peach fell to work with his hacksaw, the subdued chanting of his mates barely drowning the whining rasp of his tool. It was the last night of sawing. Other bars hung by mere shreds of metal, the scarves of the saw having been filled with blackened soap. On his knees, stopping now and then to dash the sweat from his eyes, Jules worked furiously yet methodically, while behind him his choir chanted:

> "*Lorsque plus tard, las de souffrir,*
> *Pour renaître ou pour en finir;*
> *J'ai voulu m'exiler de France;*
> *Lorsqu'impatient de marcher,*
> *J'ai voulu partir, et chercher*
> *Les vestiges d'une espérance . . .*"

At length Jules leaned back, satisfied that at least three bars would yield and bend under moderate pressure. Soap was now smeared on the latest and final cut, and then under the electric bulb at the far end of the dormitory the conspirators gathered and rehearsed their plans. Long and earnestly they talked and argued among themselves, leaving always the decision, the final word, to Jules la Pêche.

There were twenty-one men in the dormitory, and in the forthcoming break for revenge and liberty each one of them was assigned to definite work. Thus, Pas Pouce, the fellow with no thumbs, was to smash the telephone switchboard in the guard room while three others leaped for the arms rack, each with a sawed off bar as a weapon. Tête Nu, the convict whose girl was always with him, was assigned to the unlocking of one wing; bow legged Jamb' d'Arqués was to handle another, and Baby Rabbit a third. Major rôles were taken by Jules and the Necklace.

Overhead the ring of plotters the light in the caged electric bulb flickered, faded for an instant, and then burned brightly again. It was the signal for quiet. One minute more, and all the prison lights would be turned out save those in the central guard room and the dim ones at the farthest ends of the wings. Reluctantly the conspirators sought their plank beds. Again the light faded, then vanished for the night, and there fell a silence disturbed only by the beating of the tropic rain.

Heavier and heavier the downpour came, falling alike on hut and villa. It fell hissing on the muddy waters of the Maroni. It pattered on palm frond and leaf of banana plant. In the courtyard of the prison it drummed heavily on the tarpaulin covering of the guillotine and washed clean the four white stones set into the flagging beneath it. Just beyond stood the House of Double Chains, and under its roof of corrugated iron weary men stretched themselves as they lay on their bed of planks and listened to the noisy downpour.

To Cornelius, haggard and worn, the rain meant little. The trenches would be muddier next day. His shovel would be heavier. But the irrigation ditches were always muddy—and always his shovel heavy. For a time he lay wide eyed and wondered what Max was doing. No word from him had filtered through bars and guards. It was maddening—this torture of body and soul.

But still he had faith and hope. Restless, he tugged at his yoked foot and rolled

on his side as far as he was able. Probably, he thought, the Maritime Tribunal would give him but a year of solitary confinement on Ile St. Joseph. Then another attempt might be arranged. If he were on the point of capture again, he would fight his way through. Rather than be retaken and double chained in this inferno, he would face death by bullet or under the guillotine which stood across the courtyard.

Still thinking of the guillotine, he closed his eyes. His tired body relaxed. The drumming of the rain waned to a lullaby, and sleep came to him. Again, as on other nights, the prison walls fell back; and this time, in the niche reserved for the hooded guillotine, a white robed angel of mercy stood—a buxom angel with bleached hair.

DAWN came to St. Laurent and marked the ushering in of a day long to be remembered in French Guiana. With the rising of the sun, the rain stopped, and soon the atmosphere was clear save for the steaming jungle and the mist which hung perpetually over the river's mouth where the warm waters of the Maroni joined the cool brine of the sea.

The day continued clear, and as the roll of drums summoned the prisoners to their evening rice and soup, a pale full moon hung low in the eastern sky and waited on the lowering sun. The shadows lengthened eastward, and for a brief space the crowns of the tallest palms were touched with rose gold. Then night came, and the brightening moon reversed the shadows and spread silver where gold had been.

In the dormitory of the *Cercle Défiguré* the convicts paid scant attention to their suppers. Some few of them touched not a morsel, but paced uneasily up and down. Jules the Peach, sitting cross legged on the foot of his planks, eyed the men while rolling a cigaret. He was not quite satisfied. There were yet ten minutes or so to spare before the zero hour, and he intended that each one of his mates should know the dangers he would have to face.

"Listen!" he barked, and immediately the others began to assemble around him.

When all were there save Necklace, watching at the barred door, he proceeded with his warning.

"This is a crazy plan," he said in low tense tones, "and I want every damned one of you to know that your chances are less than one out of ten." He paused to let his words sink in and drew hard at his cigaret. One comprehensive glance he cast around, and then he blew the smoke noisily from his lungs.

"There will be six hundred of us loose here within a half hour," he continued. "I can promise that. Five hundred of us can storm the gate. That means we'll lose a hundred men. Allowing for another hundred dead ones through the village, leaves four hundred. By that time the Martinique troops will be in action. That means bayonets and machine guns."

Two of the listeners shifted uneasily. Another deep pull at his cigaret and the Peach flipped the butt from him.

"I doubt if a hundred of us live to get to the river," he went on while smiling grimly. "It so happens that tonight we have plenty of *pirogues* scattered along the bank on account of the free picture show the government is giving the bush blacks. That means that maybe eighty of us can get across to Dutch soil. But out of that eighty, how many do you suppose will live to get through the jungle to Paramaribo?"

There was silence. Now the Peach shrugged his muscular shoulders and laughed aloud.

"Speaking personally," he said, slapping his chest, "I'm in favor of dying tonight instead of going on in this lousy place." Contemptuously he spat on the stone floor, the mania bred of prison burning in his eyes.

A growl of approval came from the group. But the Peach was not yet quite done. Some of the men had been assigned to important work. None of these must show the white feather.

"Whoever wants to back out," he said, looking sharply at first one and then another of his fellows, "let him do so now. He can stay behind while we are on our way."

No voice was raised.

"Take your posts," the Peach ordered gruffly, and fished mechanically for his tobacco pouch and papers.

Quickly the group dispersed, two of the strongest men joining Necklace at the door.

"The guard is changing now," the latter whispered, and continued staring into a small mirror which he had poked between the bars and manipulated to an angle giving him a view of the corridor end.

Slowly the next few minutes passed, but at length the click of a key was heard as the night guard unlocked the gate to the corridor and began his tour of inspection. He came nearer, rattling each door. The men on either side of Necklace flattened themselves against the wall.

Now the guard came abreast of him and Necklace spoke, pointing to his jaw as if in pain. Contemptuously the guard answered, but leaned nearer. It was his last voluntary act, for with the rapidity of a striking cobra two sinewy arms slipped between the bars and fingers closed around his throat. Rigid and erect he stood, the life passing from him while steel bars were bended and broken off. There was now room to drag the body inside the dormitory.

Jules the Peach worked rapidly. He donned the uniform stripped hastily from the keeper, seized the keys and plucked the pistol from its holster. It was loaded and ready. Next he gave his attention to the keys, selecting one and passing the others to one of his lieutenants. Boldly now he stepped through the opening into the corridor and unlocked the door. Necklace stepped forth and shambled convict fashion toward the guard room. A few paces behind him the pseudo-guard followed, key in hand, the vizored cap pulled low. In the dormitory, crouching like tigers prepared for their kill, the other conspirators waited, at least three of them clutching deadly weapons.

Near the arms rack in the guard room four keepers sat playing cards. Another of the night force lolled near the telephone switchboard idly turning the pages of a Parisian weekly. At the sound of shuffling steps two of the players looked up from their cards to see a man in convict garb halt and face the wall. In the dim light of the corridor they saw what was ostensibly a guard step forward and unlock the gate leading into the guard-room.

A man for the hospital, the observers thought, and returned to their game. The gate swung open and the Peach advanced. Again Necklace preceded him, shielding him from view as long as possible. They arrived abreast the arms rack, and now casually the reading guard looked up from his paper.

Simultaneously the Necklace leaped upon him and snatched his weapon.

Startled, the card players looked up, one of them drawing his pistol. Two shots rang out, and as a guard slid from his chair and lay sprawled on the stone floor, three men with bars of steel came dashing in and flung themselves upon the common enemy. Halfway to the telephone a keeper fell and moved no more. A bar crashed heavily against the switchboard; another circled and crushed the skull of one of the two remaining guards.

The last one fought bravely. Shot through one arm, he crouched behind the table and fired until the magazine of his automatic was empty. A bar descended. He crumpled and lay still among the blood stained cards.

The guard room had been won. Now the shooting ceased and convicts with keys ran quickly along the various wings. Doors were unlocked. *Relégués* boiled from the dormitories. Those with military training were given loaded rifles. Of these the Peach took command, and ordered the storming of the outer gate.

Soon the moonlit courtyard was flooded with men. Rifles at the gate flashed and were answered by the deployed line of Jules the Peach. Steadily the line advanced, a howling mob behind it. The

guillotine was overturned. The guard on duty before the House of Double Chains emptied his pistol and fled. He reached the wall, but there was bayoneted and his keys taken from him.

Now the whole settlement was aroused. Guards off duty slipped on their belts and hastened toward the penitentiary. The director left his dinner table to find a useless telephone. A subordinate fetched him word that the outer gate had been forced. Rifle shots near at hand attested this. And now, through the streets of St. Laurent, the convicts poured on their way to the river bank, cursing, howling and shooting at every living thing which dared show its head.

Far away bugles shrilled and drums rolled, summoning the Martinique troops to assembly, and soon the regulars swarmed before their barrack. Magazines clattered, long bayonets gleamed in the moonlight, and soon the black soldiers were on their way.

Back at the penitentiary, now that a wholesale delivery had been effected, all was tranquil but for the groaning of the wounded and the movement here and there of a few prisoners who had chosen to remain behind. Among these was Cornelius, freed during the early stages of the riot from his ankle yoke in the House of Double Chains, but hampered now with ball and chain.

AT FIRST Cornelius had been tempted to join in the mad dash for freedom, but brief reflection had shown him that it would be but a useless throwing away of his life. Few indeed were the chances for liberty held by the unfettered. For him, holding the heavy ball and swinging the ironed leg, to run from the prison yard would be mere suicide. On the other hand, to linger where he was among the dead and wounded, he could look forward only to a renewal of his bonds—if not, indeed, to a bullet of vengeance from some one of the surviving guards certain to return.

And suddenly he thought of Max, his only link with the outside world. Fortunately the shop and sleeping quarters of the ex-*couturier* were not far away. During the time he worked for Surgeon Milius and had been permitted to roam practically free around the penitentiary and settlement, he had come to know where Max dwelt and designed his creations for the women of the higher officials. Max, Cornelius reasoned, resigned to perpetual banishment from his beloved Paris, would take no part in the prison break, and would for safety's sake most likely be found sticking closely to his own premises.

Max might take him in—might even contrive the forcing or unlocking of the steel anklet and harbor him somewhere until another try for Cayenne could be arranged. Reasoning thus, Cornelius moved cautiously toward the gates, keeping in the shadow of the wall.

There were bodies here where the outside guards had emptied their Lebels into the mob, but none of them moved as Cornelius stole forth and paused for an instant to survey the road beyond.

No living thing was in sight. Here and there along the yellow road the moonlight fell on crumpled objects which once had been men. Half a mile distant a thatched roof store was in flames. And from beyond St. Laurent and along its river front scattering reports came floating back on the night wind. But Cornelius had no time to waste. Abruptly now he turned and took a path which led away from the settlement. He had barely a hundred yards to cover.

Stealthily he picked his way, the iron ball in hand, fearful that the clanking of his chain might bring disaster, arriving at length at his destination. Perched on a knoll within hailing distance of the rear wing of the penitentiary, the small house of Max stood all but hidden from view by a cluster of dwarfed cabbage palms and breadfruit trees. There was a bit of a porch on the prison side of what Max chose to call his *salon*, and on it a figure in white stood motionless beside a climbing vine. Cornelius, taking no chances, halted while still a hundred feet distant.

Simultaneously the white figure moved and a low voiced challenge came—

"*Qui est là?*'

Cornelius recognized the guarded tones as those of Max. Boldly he answered and drew near, and cordial was his welcome.

"I've been thinking not a little about you," Max said, "but I scarcely expected a visit from you."

On the point of opening the screen door of his *salon* he paused to listen as a staccato crackling in the distance drowned the desultory popping of rifles. It ceased abruptly, then burst forth again.

"Machine guns," he said, and shrugged his shoulders. "The poor fools!" he added and led the way inside.

In the room, part workshop, part boudoir, a shaded light disclosed a pier glass and matched pieces of furniture in cane and ivory enamel. Cornelius noted at one side of the chamber a sewing machine standing before a bench heaped with varicolored soft materials. He was about to take the comfortable chair Max indicated, but hesitated as he glimpsed a graceful figure standing motionless beside a silken screen.

From drawing the curtains Max turned in time to note the embarrassed pause.

"That's only Fernande, my wax assistant," he said with a chuckle, and fell to making his guest as comfortable as possible.

A glass of liqueur brandy worked its magic. A tin of straw tipped cigarets at his elbow, Cornelius settled back and smoked. But the fragrant Turkish tobacco brought him little satisfaction. A spirit of resentment possessed him as he watched Max sitting on a stool at his feet, trying key after key in the steel anklet. The thought haunted him that for nearly eighteen months now he had been the toy of circumstance, unable to help himself or plan his future. People were forever helping him, and taking risks in his behalf. There was Madame Julie. There was the bush negro whose *pirogue* had been riddled in the fog. And now a male dressmaker was ministering to him while he sat inactive and helpless. It was humiliating. It was high time he acted on his own initiative.

"Did Madame Julie get into trouble on my account?" he asked presently.

"Not at all," Max answered. "She is still presiding over the Coq d'Or."

It may have been the abrupt transition from the horrible place of double chains to the luxury of his present surroundings that sponsored his mood; it may have been the accumulated bitterness that burned like acid within him and that, like acid, had gnawed its way out. In any event Cornelius was through for all time with inactive waiting and hoping while others worked and planned for him.

The key moved in the lock. The anklet opened on stiffened hinge and fell to the floor. Max straightened up and spoke regretfully:

"I couldn't do a thing for you in the House of Double Chains. That's the one place forbidden to me. But now I can hide you here until——"

He stopped, for Cornelius seemed not to be listening. Instead he was on his feet, staring contemptuously at the wax figure, while thinking that he after all had lately been cast for a rôle as inert and flavorless as that of the pink and white "Fernande" standing yonder. It was a galling thought.

Suddenly he turned to Max and gripped him by the hand.

"You've been a friend," he said hoarsely, "and I'm grateful to you. But I'm not going to trespass further on that friendship. I might be found here. You would suffer for it. So now it's a case of good luck and goodby. I'm off for Cayenne."

"But you can't possibly get across the seventy miles of impassable jungle between this spot and the marshes on Cayenne Island," Max protested.

Grimly Cornelius nodded. And now, as if to deter him, a sputtering burst of gun fire sifted through the curtains. The Martinique regulars were still at work. Men were dying along the bank and on the river. Few of them would live to

reach the Dutch shore. But the dead men at least had tried! And so would he.

Firmly he shook off the hand which would have stayed him, and headed for the door. Now that he had tasted freedom for the second time, relieved of ball and chain, his fighting instinct rode supreme and spurred him on.

CHAPTER XIV

FRONT PAGE NEWS

THE DECEMBER rain fell on the tiled roofs of Cayenne and washed the cobbles of the Rue Glorieux. To Madame Julie the rain itself meant little or nothing. It marked at least a passing of time. The big revolt was over, Max had probably taken no part in it, she reasoned, and the American, a prisoner within a prison, would be safe in the House of Double Chains. It had been but a few weeks since he had been captured.

At the approaching Maritime Tribunal's session at St. Laurent he would be tried and sentenced probably to a year of solitary on Ile St. Joseph. With the completion of that year another escape might be planned. She would be glad to help. She liked the fellow. She thought of the message which had come to her through Hannibal, the pilot. Max reported that it was impossible to communicate with No. 48,987. He was in the House of the Double Chains. Nothing could be done for him pending his trial late in December.

Her thoughts reverted this rainy afternoon to the preliminary inquiry held the morning after the raid. The prisoner had stoutly denied complicity on the part of any one connected with the Coq d'Or. He had found a rear door open and had crept upstairs and to an unoccupied room. To Colonel Molyneux she owed much, for it was by reason of his intercession that she was not summoned to attend the inquiry.

Molyneux indeed had proved to be a friend—a friend in need and in a high place. He had even attempted to learn the authorship of the anonymous complaint which he alleged had been sent to the police just previous to the raid, but had had no definite success.

"Probably one of your rivals in the café line," he had told her vaguely.

The deep howl of a steamer's siren interrupted her reflections, and she knew the monthly boat from France was at the pier. The signal station had reported its approach several hours before, and Madame Julie looked forward to a busy evening. New patrons would arrive. Old customers from among the officers and crew would throng her tables and sit beneath the welcome fans.

Soon customers drifted in, and presently the mail arrived. There were periodicals for the house and Madame Julie busied herself placing the illustrated weeklies in their holders. Men gathered at the paper rack and chose their favorite journal.

Sailors in blue dungaree now entered. White jacketed stewards from the docked steamer followed, and the Coq d'Or rang with jest and the clinging of glasses. Cards at one table, dominoes at another, the mariners amused themselves at various games.

The haze of tobacco smoke grew thicker, and the banter became louder. Cimiénne tripped to and fro with her tray. A fireman, more boisterous than his fellows, pawed her shapely brown arm and received the usual warning. There was another café farther down the street toward the barracks where he could swear as loudly as he pleased and put his feet on the chairs. He could paw women to his heart's content in the huts of the castoffs along the Street of the Lost Souls.

That particular table subsided, but as evening approached one of the card playing sailors seemed to be in line for reproof or ejection. A dark fellow of wiry build and quick movements, his voice rang out at intervals, protesting, complaining, defying, vociferating in a high pitched *patois* of Southern France that his comrades were idiots and imbeciles, that they could not distinguish a knave

from a deuce, that he was superior to them in every respect.

They were playing for money as well as for drinks. When the dark fellow lost, his abuse rose high and shrill. When he won, his bony fist crashed upon the table top with the taking of each trick, while jeering taunts issued from his lips.

Many times Madame Julie cast an annoyed glance in the sailor's direction, and as many times she turned to her accounts and bit her lip. After all the place was neither a nursery for young folk nor a tea room where one came to nibble chicken wings and babble politely; but a cabaret where men came to drink and while away the hours with cards and dice.

The rainy afternoon drew near its close. Keepers entered, and over their *aperitifs* discussed the aftermath of the bloody revolt at St. Laurent. It had been the greatest outbreak in all the history of French Guiana, and not since the liberation of Alfred Dreyfus from Devil's Island had the colony been so wrought up.

The musicians entered and doffed their dripping waterproofs. The keepers, most of them married men living in quarters, departed for their dinners. Some of the steamship men left also, but others remained to dine on shore. Among these latter were the card playing sailors, their number now reduced to four.

COLONEL MOLYNEUX came in for an absinthe, and while drinking it gave Madame Julie a few details concerning the revolt at Guiana's principal convict depot.

"We haven't the complete figures yet," he told her. "Reports are still coming in. We know that nearly two hundred fleeing convicts were shot down by the Martinique regulars. Eighteen or twenty of them survived to reach the Dutch side of the river. We know that the body of the planner of the outbreak, a fellow they called Jules the Peach, was found dressed in a keeper's uniform just beyond the prison gates. Practically every *relégué* has been put at grave digging or in the coffin shop."

The colonel paused to gulp down the last of his drink, and then added as an afterthought:

"It is too bad that we have been unable to locate your American friend. I really was jealous of him at the time you had him hidden upstairs. Unlucky devil! He's probably at the bottom of the Maroni, weighted down by the ball and chain. He might be—"

"What do you mean, *mon Colonel?*" Madame Julie broke in. "Why should special search be made for the American who hid in my house unbeknownst to me?" Apparently calm, she hung on his answer.

"Evidently you haven't read the *Courier,*" Molyneux said. "Shame on you for not keeping up with the gossip of the town! Look on the front page. I'll give you more of the story when I see you again. Just now I must hasten away to my duties."

Scarcely had the screen door banged behind Molyneux before Madame Julie was on her way to her desk. The local evening paper lay there untouched. Press of duties had precluded her nightly scanning of it. Curiously she picked up the four-page sheet and gave her attention to the front page. Fully a half of the latter was covered by various versions of the bloody revolt. Pity and horror moved her as she skimmed rapidly through the tragic details amplifying the colonel's description. From the final paragraph her eyes leaped to the top of the page, where under a separate caption a remarkable story appeared.

Over and over again Madame Julie read the text, and again and again mixed emotions stirred within her womanly bosom. Her first thoughts were of the American, lying probably at the bottom of the river. It was too bad that he could not have lived. He was a brave fellow with wide shoulders and fine eyes. Inevitably her thoughts turned on Max. He would be downcast at the development.

Years rolled back, and for a few precious minutes the mistress of the Coq

d'Or returned to Paris. Max was by her side, gay and debonair. They were driving in the Bois. Horse chestnut leaves were sailing by their carriage. They were discussing the subject of where to dine that October evening, both of them happily ignorant of the horrible thing to come to pass within one short week. A deep breath, a stern compression of her lips—and Madame Julie raised her eyes to make change for a departing customer.

Dinner over, the night advanced, but still the gambling sailors continued at their table. The dark fellow was winning heavily, and shortly after eleven one of his mates rose and departed, leaving a month's wages behind.

The crowd thinned out. The musicians covered their instruments and left, and at this juncture another of the gamblers cursed heartily and called for a consoling drink. He downed it at a swallow, and with empty pockets headed for the ship, leaving the dark fellow and his mate to finish the game.

It was fully half an hour later when Madame Julie approached their table.

"Messieurs," she said. "it is time for me to close."

"Just a few minutes more, madame," the winner told her, "and I will have the money of this cabbage head."

Madame Julie, complacent but far from being pleased, shrugged her shoulders and turned, but barely had she taken three steps toward her cash desk before harsh words reached her ears.

"I thought so!" a voice snarled. "These cards are crimped. You would cheat an old friend, you stinking shark! Give me back my money!"

"Give you nothing!" the winner rasped.

Chair legs grated as Madame Julie turned to see the two men facing each other.

The dark fellow's fingers were spread over his winnings as though to protect the pile of crumpled banknotes and silver.

"I will have my money!" the loser shouted.

A back handed blow from the other cut short further utterance. The winner stood crouching, his eyelids drooping as though to meet the curling upper lip now drawn wolf-like above his gleaming teeth. Too late to dodge the savage kick which rewarded his blow, he screamed a vile word and snatched up a heavy glass carafe half filled with water.

"*Cochon!*" the other snarled, closing in.

Although sturdier and stronger than his darker and smaller mate he was unable to dodge the descending bottle. It crashed heavily atop the head of the loser who crumpled and lay still.

A little cry of horror came from Madame Julie.

"Messieurs! Messieurs!" she called frantically, and stepped toward the scene of the brief battle.

"Shut up, you cow," the survivor bellowed. "Fetch me a drink and be quick about it."

Coolly, the insolent patron set down the carafe and went about stuffing the winnings into his pocket.

"*Vache!*"

It was the supreme insult to a woman of France. Never before in her thirty-odd years of existence had Madame Julie been called a cow. Fire kindled in her eyes as she advanced and flung herself upon the surprised sailor. Her fingers entwined in his dark hair, she succeeded in knocking his head against the marble top table.

Quickly, however, the sailor twisted himself free, and straightening, seized the infuriated woman by the throat. Deeper and deeper his thumbs sank from view.

A horrible pain engulfed her. Her knees gave way. Sinking, she gurgled an inarticulate call for help.

CHAPTER XV

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM

NOISELESSLY the barefoot black woman moved about on the earthen floor of her hut, pausing now and then to look at the white man who lay sleeping on a pile of leaves. In his honor she had slain two chickens, and

even now they were stewing on the open fire outside. Yams and breadfruit were baking also among the coals, to be ready when the guest should awaken from his long sleep.

Night fell. Clouds hid moon and stars, and presently a gentle rain pattered on the frond thatched roof and dropped hissing on the fire. The black woman looked to her pot, and thrust a tin fork into one of the yams. It was done. Satisfied, she turned away, when a guttural call came to her from an adjoining hut and another bush negress approached and made inquiries. Beneath a gable extension of plaited leaves they stood sheltered from the rain while the first negress volunteered particulars to her neighbor.

Yes; it was the same *déporté* whom she and her man had sheltered some two months before. He had been retaken in Cayenne and had been sent back to the big prison in the forest. That morning at sunrise she had seen him swimming the river, to fall exhausted on the beach almost at the very door of her house. As to how long he would stay, she knew not. When her man returned from the upriver country he would get in touch with the yellow haired woman in Cayenne. Perhaps she would give another bolt of bright calico and many trinkets of beauty.

The neighbor departed to her own hut and fire, and now the black hostess reentered her house and squatted near the sleeping man. She found tobacco and rolled herself a cigar. Crooning softly, she smoked and awaited the awakening of her guest.

Cornelius opened his eyes. At first his benumbed senses caught no hint of his location. It was dark overhead, unusually dark for the House of Double Chains. Mechanically he moved his right leg. No yoke tugged at his ankle. He bent the left leg and felt for the steel anklet. It was gone. Now he remembered; Max had unlocked it. And when he had run bare headed into the jungle, Max had recalled him and forced chocolate, a flashlight and a loaded pistol on him.

"If you must go," he had told him, "and you should get through, find Madame Julie. She will help you."

He had gnawed the last crumb of bitter chocolate, long, long ago. He had lost the pistol while swimming the first river just above the settlement of Sinnamarie. The flashlight had given out during the blackness of the second night—or was it the third? It happened on the beach he had to follow to reach the river mouth where Cayenne nestled on its island. He had tried to go on, but stumbled over the roots of rotting mangroves. He had tried to sleep, but winged creatures brushed his face and huge land crabs clattered around and over him.

Now the smoke of strong tobacco came to his nostrils. A soft crooning came to his ears. He raised his head and saw in the dim light shed by a battered lantern, the black woman. Her face was familiar. He sat erect and examined her at closer range. Yes; it was she who had harbored him before. Quickly now he glanced around and recognized his homely surroundings. They were the same, even to the empty bird cage hanging near the door. The converted oil tin which served as water bucket stood in its accustomed place, the dipper fashioned from a coconut shell placed nearby it.

Immediately definite knowledge of his whereabouts flashed upon him. He had conquered the jungle; conquered the lonely stretches of tropic beach soaked alternately by light of sun and moon, or plunged in deepest shadow. He was within two miles of Cayenne!

He was wide awake now, and scrambled to his feet. The black woman smiled at him and spoke. The words conveyed no meaning to him. As he had learned before, her knowledge of French was limited to the single word *tabac*. But the pan of meat and broth she set before him was eloquent of her purpose, and eagerly he fell to eating.

Strength seeped into him with each spoonful and morsel. Again and again the negress filled his pan. At length he could eat no more. He stood up and smiled his thanks, then crossed to the

doorway and looked out. He saw other fires twinkling here and there in the little village of negro huts, and beyond them, across the marshes, the pale and lurid glow of a city's lights.

There lay Cayenne, Cornelius thought; and beyond those lights, in all probability, lay some sea going craft under another flag than the Tricolor of France. He might find refuge on one of them. He would not trespass upon the hospitality of Madame Julie, but would at least pause long enough to thank her for her former kindness.

Renewed courage filled him as he looked on the lights of Cayenne. The pendulum of fate had swung too long against him. Surely it was due now to swing the other way. He would press on. He knew the winding path across the marshes. Despite the darkness, guided partly by the glow of Cayenne's lights, and partly by the hazel and violet mist which hung over the river on his left, he could find his way. The gentle rain meant nothing to him. Wet and ragged and empty handed he would go—let come what might.

Now he turned to the black woman and tried to make her understand. His words were useless, but as he pointed first at himself and then toward Cayenne, she smiled and nodded. What was more natural than that the white man, rested and strong with food, should steal into Cayenne to see the yellow haired woman?

Along the yielding path, Cornelius strode, the rain falling lightly on him. He judged by his fill of sleep that the hour was late. The time would be ideal to steal into the rear courtyard of the Coq d'Or, and perhaps through the native maid who had served him before, get in touch with Madame Julie. Beyond that he had no definite plan. He might creep around the outskirts of the city and secrete himself aboard some tramp steamship. He might be retaken. He might escape.

On and on he moved, the muddy path a boulevard compared with the jungle trail where spreading roots and hanging *liana* vines had tripped him on his march to the sea.

HE GAINED the first of the outlying hovels. A cur snarled at him from the denser shadows, but all else was dark and silent. He kept on and passed along a deserted street. Yonder was a warehouse. He recognized it, passed it and bore to the left. Now the Coq d'Or was but a few steps away. He drew nearer until presently he could see the café and the single palm tree behind it. Still nearer he approached, hugging the wall across the street, until he had an oblique view of the room in which dim lights were burning.

Far down the Rue Glorieux, beneath a sickly street lamp, two men were arguing drunkenly. Now Cornelius moved stealthily across the street and stood near the gate leading into the courtyard. He listened intently, and above the patter of the rain he could hear voices in the big room. Madame Julie was still keeping open. It was not as late as he had imagined. He opened the gate carefully and passed through into the courtyard. And carefully and noiselessly he lifted the latch of the screen door leading into the kitchen. The door yielded to his touch.

It was hot and dark in there, but dry. He found a chair and sat inhaling the fragrance from a steaming urn on the stove's edge. A coffee hunger was on him, but he dared not risk the possible clink of spoon and cup. There soon would be time enough for all that.

The minutes lengthened, and now he pictured Madame Julie's gasp of amazement when she should lay eyes on him. Direct from the House of Double Chains; through the cruel jungle and across the rivers; empty handed and alone—he had done well to get this far!

The sound of a voice raised in anger interrupted his reflections. Cornelius moved across the kitchen and pushed softly on the swinging door. Beyond lay the pantry, another swinging door barring the way to the big room. Again came a harsh voice followed by the sound of scraping chair legs, a blow, and the fall of some heavy object. He approached the second swinging door and opening it

slightly, was in time to hear Madame Julie given the unforgivable epithet, and to witness her attempt at retaliation.

Rage filled him. He burst through the pantry door, leaped toward the struggling pair and hurled himself at the man. Seizing him roughly by the collar he wrenched him back and away from the half conscious Madame Julie. Now the dark fellow was at his own throat. He tore lose the clutching fingers, but an upraised knee caught him in the pit of the stomach.

He was forced to close in. To regain his breath he had to stall for time. On the white blouse of his adversary he buried his face and twined his arms around him. Some of the pain left him. Strength seeped back into him, and he strove to put his man down. Around and around they spun. For the second time Cornelius lifted him partly off his feet and bore him backward. A table crashed. Now they were on the floor, rolling over and over, the sailor clawing and biting, Cornelius striking at his jaw. Again and again with a fury born perhaps of pain, perhaps of a caged existence, he lashed out short armed blows with every ounce of weight and strength left to him. Suddenly the ceiling lights were switched on, and in the flooding brilliance, as he felt a thumb at his eyeball, he struck for the last time.

His opponent wilted beneath him, trembled, and then lay still, with blood oozing from nose and lip.

Slowly, very slowly, Cornelius staggered to his feet and looked around. Unkempt and bloody though he was, despite his unfamiliar beard and dripping rags, Madame Julie had left in her sufficient vitality and perception to recognize him. One instant he stood breathless from overexertion, and then the fatigue and privations of three days and nights told against him and he collapsed.

When next his senses partly returned, he raised his eyes to find Madame Julie stooping over him, pressing the rim of a glass to his lips. Liquor burned in his throat. He raised his head and saw Cimiénne, the maid, bending over the sailor who had first fallen. The fellow whom he had vanquished still lay where he had fallen.

"Praise God you are here!" Madame Julie said hoarsely. "I have sent for the police. They will take care of—"

"Police!" Cornelius echoed, fresh terror gripping him. "Then I'll be off."

Weakly he staggered rather than walked toward the pantry door, but had taken only three or four steps when a detaining hand fell on the ragged sleeve of the shirt.

"Is it possible that you don't know what has happened since the revolt?" a gentle but husky voice breathed in his ear. "You have nothing to fear from the police. Come. Read tonight's paper."

Dully, with a vacant expression, Cornelius stared and listened. Why should he not fear the police? Was he back in the jungle again, or on the beach, hoping against hope that his dream of freedom might come true? Still uncomprehending he permitted himself to be led to a table, and dropping into a chair fell to reading the paper which Madame Julie placed in his hands.

With widening eyes he read the caption: "Freedom Beckons Too Late To Missing American Convict"; and with bounding pulses devoured the printed matter below. It ran:

> Unavailing search has been made at St. Laurent and vicinity for the American *relégué* No. 48,987, Cornelius Storm, by name, who has been missing from the disciplinary house since the quelling of the late revolt. It is thought likely that the American was drowned or shot while attempting to cross the Maroni to Dutch soil, and that he will never learn that freedom in the course of time might have been his by reason of the confession in Marseille last Monday afternoon of the Corsican guilty of the murder for which Storm was apparently unjustly convicted and sentenced to a life term.
>
> It is understood that a transcript of the confession of the guilty man reached Cayenne by cable this morning, and that had the American prisoner been located the Court of Cassation would have acted quickly in his behalf.
>
> Readers of the *Courier* will recollect that this unfortunate man escaped to Cayenne several weeks ago, and was returned to St. Laurent to await trial, after having been located by

police hiding on the upper floor of a resort in the Rue Glorieux.

Cornelius raised his head.

"The pendulum is at last swinging for me," he told himself softly.

He saw Madame Julie at the telephone and heard her ask repeatedly that Colonel Molyneux be located and sent without delay to the Coq d'Or. He knew not who this colonel might be, or where he figured in the events to come. It was enough for him that the pendulum was swinging his way. Fatigue fell away from him. The wine of contentment stole through his veins. He sat erect in his rags, and with smiling unconcern watched the entering policemen.

CHAPTER XVI

FREE

AT THE remodeled monastery which served him for a residence and offices, his Excellency the governor-general of Guiana was sitting up unusually late while poring over communications from St. Laurent. He was scholarly in appearance, with bulging forehead and flowing beard of white, and there the likeness ended. Ex-colonel of horse artillery, disciplinarian, unflinching colonial servant of France, the quality of mildness was lacking in him. Not so, justice. And further be it said to his credit, he was a despiser of governmental red tape in all its forms.

He was in the midst of dictating to a secretary when suddenly his body servant approached and stood apologetically before him.

"What is it?" his Excellency barked, annoyed at the interruption.

"It is Colonel Molyneux and the cabaret woman who runs the Coq d'Or, sir. The colonel insists on seeing you immediately."

The governor-general frowned.

"He says it is a matter of great importance," the servant added, "and concerns the escaped American prisoner."

"Show them in." Abruptly the speaker turned from his papers, wondering, and faced the entrance door.

Soon Madame Julie and Molyneux appeared, and straightway the latter approached his superior.

"A miracle has happened, *mon General*," he said. "The American prisoner we have been looking for turned up for the second time at the Coq d'Or in time to save this good woman from a brutal attack. The assailant is now under lock and key. The American, much the worse for wear, is waiting just outside. He knows nothing of his case except what he has read in the *Courier*. I would ask of your Excellency that you take appropriate action."

A few gruff questions, some enlightening answers, and the governor-general directed that the prisoner be shown in.

Cornelius entered walking free and unattended. Despite his rags, his torn flesh and many bruises, a great joy welled within him, drowning all sense of fatigue and bodily pain. His eyes swept the room and fastened upon the scholarly features of the white bearded governor-general. Slowly he approached the massive desk.

For a minute his Excellency surveyed the forlorn but erect figure of the prisoner, and then he frowned and stroked his white beard.

"I'll not ask you how you came to be at liberty," he said at length, "nor why, above all the other places in the city of Cayenne, you should repeatedly select the Coq d'Or as a refuge. It is sufficient that you are here, and alive."

The speaker paused to fish among the papers on his desk, selecting therefrom a sheaf of documents from which he flipped two or three of the uppermost sheets and consulted the opening paragraph. Again, not unkindly, he addressed the prisoner standing mutely before him.

"Would it interest you to know who killed Gaston Moreau?" he asked softly, a quizzical glint in his eyes.

"It is perhaps the most important thing in life to me," Cornelius answered simply.

"I have here," the governor-general continued, "the transcript of an accusa-

tion made under oath to the police of Marseilles. I had preliminary advices two or three days ago, since which time we have been looking for you. This transcript gives fuller details. It arrived by cable but a few hours ago. Previous to reading it to you I had better tell you briefly of the events leading up to the arrest of the one for whose crime you stand convicted."

Again his Excellency paused, this time to clear his throat.

"It would seem," he resumed, "that two steamship stewards had a fight in a Marseilles dive. One of them, Sampiero by name, stabbed his mate, but before he could flee, the police caught and held him. The wounded man was fatally hurt, but before he died he made a sworn statment to the police, accusing Sampiero of a previous murder. The dead man, Ducasse by name, had his revenge, for I have been advised that Sampiero has been induced to confess and substantiate in every detail the accusation which I will now read to you."

Again the governor-general transferred his attention to the sheet uppermost in his hand, and in clear, incisive tones read as follows:

"I, Edouard Ducasse, hereby accuse Jérôme Sampiero of the murder of one Gaston Moreau in his room at the Hôtel Suisse, in the Rue St. Severin, Paris. Moreau was the chief steward of a steamship in the Mediterranian trade. Sampiero and I were working under him. We were all discharged for stealing liquors and stores. We learned that Moreau was cheating us out of our share of the booty, and we were looking forward to a settlement late in July of last year.

"We came into his room at the Hôtel Suisse and found him with a cut on his hand and bumps on his head. He told us he had had a fight with an American over a suit of clothes. We accused him of cheating us. He struck Sampiero, and before I could interfere Sampiero had drawn a knife. Moreau kicked this out of his hand. Sampiero picked up a bottle and smashed Moreau again and again over the head.

"It all happened very quickly. We picked up the knife and took some money from the dresser drawer. We waited for quite awhile, but no one came. Then we slipped quietly out of the hotel and to the room we shared in the Rue Serpe. Next day we read in the paper of an American being arrested for the crime. A few days later Sampiero and I shipped aboard a steamer in the Argentine trade.

"Months later we learned that the American had been convicted of the crime. Stabbed in the chest by Jérôme Sampiero, and anxious to see justice done, I most solemnly swear that this statement is true, and subscribe my name to it."

The governor-general finished reading, laid down the papers and rose. He approached Cornelius, gazed thoughtfully and pityingly at him for some moments.

"My son," he said presently in gentle tones, "you have suffered much. I am sorry. France, like other nations, acts at times on misinformation. But she's never ungrateful—never unready to retract or to reward. I haven't the power to pardon you or to commute your sentence in any way. But I am invested with the authority to parole you."

His Excellency turned to Madame Julie.

"Until further orders, pending action by the Court of Cassation, I hereby parole the prisoner in your custody. Look well after him."

Madame Julie and Cornelius passed along the corridor and stood for a moment on the stone steps worn smooth by tread of tonsured holy men and martial heel. It had stopped raining. The stars were peeping forth. Rain drops still glistened on the pale yellow hair of the woman. At thought of Max, well and truly served, she smiled. Likewise a smile appeared on the bruised features of Cornelius Storm.

Each busy with own thoughts, still smiling, they set off for the Rue Glorieux, deaf alike to the murmuring voices behind them, to the sweet piping of the night heron in the marshes beyond.

THE END

By HAROLD LAMB

The PANTHER

A Narrative of the Crusades

UNKNOWN to the men who held the eastern frontier in the year 1260, the curtain had risen upon the last act of the Crusades. Nearly a century before Saladin had struck his blow to wrest Jerusalem from the knights, and thereafter Richard the Lion Heart had failed in his gallant attempt to recover it.

Now the men who garrisoned the front line of Christianity were soldier monks of the military orders—Hospitallers and Templars—for the most part. They had fortified themselves along the coast from Antioch south to Gaza, and with their backs to the sea they awaited what was to be, without hope of further aid from Europe.

The curtain rose, and the man who came out at once upon the stage looked more like a clown than anything else.

He spoke his own prologue, prophesying war. He was Baibars, the Panther. Once they had called him the Crossbowman, but now he was Sultan of Egypt. And he is well worth a second glance.

No doubt he appears mad, but he is not. He plays the tricks of a clown to amuse himself, but he is not a clown. He is delighted when he manages to disappear altogether from our sight. He is quite capable of coming on again as a beggar or a wandering crossbowman—and woe to the fellow player who gives his identity away. The Panther is, in brief, a true actor of the East that we have never understood, and he is a great actor. One of his audience, the friar William of Tripoli, said that, as a soldier, he was not inferior to Julius Caesar, nor did he yield in malignity to Nero.

Look at him in his natural person, and you will behold a giant in stature, his hair red, his broad face sun darkened. One eye blue, the other whitened by the scar that blinded it. All of his six feet clad in the colored silks, the velvet vest and wide girdle cloth, the gold inlaid armor pieces, the black and gold *khalat*, the turban wound helmet of a Mamluk who was also Sultan. His left hand is his sword hand.

Consider his past— A Tartar of the Golden Horde, a desert bred fighter, sold at Damascus for a slave at a price of about ninety dollars and returned on account of the blemish in his eye. He called himself the Crossbowman when he joined the roistering White Slaves of the River and became a leader of men who were intolerant of leaders.

Probably Baibars himself could not have named over the full list of his battles. We know that he helped wipe out the Crusaders at Gaza in 1244, that he was one of Pearl Spray's triumvirate a few years later and that his counter attack at Mansura broke the heart of St. Louis and overthrew the chivalry of France. With his own hands he wounded one Sultan of Egypt and slew another. His soldiers spoke of him as Malik Dahir, the Triumphant King.

But he is really the Commander of the Faithful, the good kalif of the Thousand and One Nights. True, the name in the tales is that of Haroun the Blessed; the deeds, however, are Baibars'. He, not the cold and cautious Haroun of two centuries before, feasted gigantically and passed his days in disguise among his people; he appointed porters to be princes, and made princes into porters to gratify a whim; he assembled the fairest girls of that part of the world, to add variety to his harem.

The real scene of the Thousand and One Nights is not Bagdad but Cairo.* The river with its pleasure barges rowed by slaves is the Nile, not the Tigris. The unruly slaves of the nights are the Mamluks.

Among the many rôles played by Baibars that of the Sultan-in-disguise appealed most to the fancy of his people. Incognito, with his cup companions, he would raid the public baths to carry off the choicest women. Unattended, he would mount his horse and go off, to appear the next day in Palestine—on the fourth day in the Arabian desert. He had all a Tartar's ability to ride far and fast. He played court tennis at Damascus, and —eight hundred miles away—at Cairo in the same week. He would ride in at the triple gate of Aleppo's gray citadel when the garrison believed him feasting on the Nile.

His counselors were not enlightened as to his plans—or else their noses were led to the wrong scent. For all his Moslems knew, their Sultan might be listening at their elbows, or at sea a thousand miles away. He might be a tall Mamluk sitting his horse under a gate, or a tall antelope hunter out with leopards beyond the sheep pastures, or a tall stranger from Persia rocking in prayer at the elbow of the *kadi* reading from the Koran in the chief

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*The origin of the tales known as the Arabian Nights is, of course, Indian and Persian to a great extent. The name and some incidents of the life of Haroun ar Raschid, kalif of Bagdad, have been added by the story tellers. But scholars have made certain that the collection of the tales centered in Cairo, and that the deeds attributed to Haroun are really Baibars' for the most part. For one thing, the coarse humor and the comedy are Egyptian, not Arabian. And the references to Christian knights and Crusaders belong to Baibars' day.

mosque. His people took pains not to identify him, because Baibars, incognito, would cut off the head of a man who salaamed to him or cried his name in a moment of forgetfulness. They dreaded his coming, even while they listened exultingly to the growing tale of his exploits—and shivered with terror.

Baibars was a Sultan after their own hearts. The story teller of the bazaar corner, and the blind man sitting in the sun of the mosque courtyard were his minstrels. Who could relate the full tale of his daring? Or his zeal for Islam? Or his championship of the holy war? The Thousand and One tales grew up around him, but they did not relate the whole.

He had Saladin's secret of victory, and he became as strict a Moslem as the son of Ayub—although in his private excursions he allowed himself license enough. He closed the wine shops and burned the stores of hashish, but secretly he drank the fermented mare's milk of the Tartars. What Saladin had accomplished by will power, and Richard of England had achieved by nervous energy, the Panther surpassed by sheer abounding vitality.

He joined in the archery tests of his Mamluks, and outdid them; he wielded his cane spear in the jousting field and overthrew them; he hastened to the polo fields; he hunted with leopards during a march, and his horses won the races. He surrounded his gigantic person with the splendor of a conqueror—with viceroy, master of the horse, lord of the drums, grand huntsman, polo bearer, slipper holder, lord of the chair, and all the fellowship of the black eunuchs.

Horns and drums heralded his approach, when he played his public rôle of Sultan. To soldiers who caught his fancy, he gave emeralds or Christian girls or estates in Damascus, as the whim struck him. At a suspicion of revolt he beheaded one hundred and eighty lords of Cairo.

And yet he had a canny sense of finance. In the first days of his sultanate he reduced all taxes, while he met his enormous expenditures by levies on conquered territory. He built hospitals out of tribute paid by brothels, then he closed the brothels. He gleaned money for his fleet by raiding the Italian merchantmen.

Letters brought to his headquarters were answered within the day, and the answers dictated to his secretaries went out swiftly by pigeon post, galloper and fast galley. When his secretaries were brought to despair by one of his long absences, he would be apt to dismount at his headquarters and come in upon them unannounced, to work through the night hours over communications in Greek, Arabic, Margrabian, Turkish. He exchanged letters and ambassadors with Charles of Anjou and the Venetians, with the Spanish kings and Conradin the last of the Hohenstaufen.

By spies and merchants and friends among the Europeans, he kept his finger on events, knowing that Christendom was divided in civil war, and the French Crusaders driven from Constantinople at last. He worked steadily and effectively to isolate the Crusaders in Syria from their people in Europe.

The Panther had two ambitions—to defeat the Mongol khans, and to drive the Crusaders out of the East. And, as Saladin had done, he called for the *jihad*, the holy war against the infidels—Mongols and Christians alike.

HIS FIRST ambition was granted by fate in this year 1260. For two generations, after the great march led by Genghis Khan, the Mongol hordes* had been pressing into the West. One of the Mongol armies had sacked Bagdad, put-

*The Mongol *ordu* or horde was not an unruly multitude but a disciplined military unit. The word means headquarters or "abiding place." The Mongol armies, permanent organizations in which men served for a lifetime, were the most effective fighting machines of that age.

The incoming of the Mongols from the East altered the whole scheme of things from India to Venice. In 1235-1240 they overran eastern Europe as far as Silesia and the shore of the Adriatic. In Asia Minor they drove out the last of the Seljuks who had long been a barrier against the Crusaders.

At the same time they swept before them the remnants of enemies fleeing from Central Asia—Turkomans, Kharesmians, Othman Turks. These warriors of the East made their appearance around the lands of the Crusaders, who were outnumbered by the hard fighting multitudes.

In Egypt, under the rule of the Mamluks, the fugitive clans found a place to settle down and turn against the Mongols, while the Crusaders were too weak in numbers to do more than retire to their strongholds and watch events.

ting an end forever to the dynasty of the kalifs. Then it had turned aside long enough to demolish the strongholds of the Assassins in the mountains of Persia.

This army was under command of Hulagu, a grandson of Genghis Khan. Slowly and remorselessly it moved over the Euphrates, captured Aleppo and camped beneath the hill villages of the Armenians. Haython, king of the Armenians, swore alliance with Hulagu Khan, as did the Christians in Antioch. On his part Hulagu had announced that he would regain Jerusalem for the Crusaders—and for a moment the Crusaders on the coast rejoiced in the prospect of a mighty, although inflexible ally—when the Kha Khan of all the hordes died away in the East, at his city in the Gobi sands. Hulagu had to journey with his *ordu* back to the East, but Haython persuaded him to leave a division of his army behind. This division numbered about ten thousand men. But until now, except for one or two setbacks, a Mongol division had never been defeated.

Meanwhile the Mongols had sent to Egypt a summons to submit, in their usual blunt way.

"These are the words of him who rules the earth—tear down your walls and submit. It is for you to fly, for us to pursue. Our horses are very swift, our swords like thunderbolts, our hearts hard as mountains. Be warned. Otherwise that will happen which will happen, and what it is to be we know not."

This summons filled the Mamluks of Egypt with fear and anger in equal measure. But Baibars called for war, and in the end he had his way. The heads of the Mongol envoys were cut off and hung above the gates of Cairo, and the host of Egypt rode over the sands into Palestine to meet the dreaded horde. Most of the Mamluks rode unwillingly, and the Arab contingents hung back, ready to bolt. Then the one eyed Panther—himself a Tartar, wise in the warfare of the steppes—took command of the advance and surprised and broke up a Mongol detachment at Gaza.

Meanwhile the division of the horde led by a general named Ketbogha hastened up from Damascus, and the Mamluks were face to face with the conquerors from the Gobi. The battle began at Ain-i-Jalut—the Well of Goliath.

Many tales are told of this battle. It is clear that the Mongols were outnumbered at least three or four to one—that their charge broke one of the Moslem wings and staggered the Sultan's center, when the masses of Mamluk cavalry counter-attacked and bore down Ketbogha's warriors.

The Mongols were driven from the field. Without support, weakened by the great heat, the men of the horde were harried to the north. Ketbogha was slain. Baibars, exulting in his victory, pressed forward without respite, on the heels of the Mongol horsemen in their bronze armor and dark enameled helmets. As the wrack of thorn bush flies before the wind, the riders of the Gobi sped beneath the gray walls of Hebron, down into the gorge of the Jordan—beyond the Jordan to the headwaters of the Euphrates. They vanished into the salt desert, leaving the black banners of the Mamluks flying over Damascus.

Baibars did not turn back from the pursuit until he had regained Aleppo.

For the first time since the triumph of Genghis Khan, the Mongol horsemen had met their match. The real test of strength between the riders of the Gobi and the slave warriors of Cairo was still to come; but in this lightning rush of events in the year 1260, the Mongols passed from Palestine, leaving Jerusalem secure in the Panther's hands.

It happened with the swiftness of a windstorm, whirling up the sand from the plain. With the Mongols removed from the scene, the Panther turned his attention to the Crusaders. He meant to strike at them before the Mongols could return.

But Baibers was much too wise to make war in haste. First, he made certain preparations of his own.

To discourage another Crusade against

Egypt by sea, he blocked up the Damietta channel with rocks and moved the city itself back up the river; he built signal towers along the coast, organized a relay pigeon post between Cairo and Damascus.

To strengthen his frontiers, and to add to his treasury, he seized Damascus treacherously, accusing its lord of allying himself with the Mongols. Including the Armenians in this accusation, he marched north and ravaged the hill castles that had been secure even in Saladin's wars. With throngs of captives, and an Armenian prince, and camel trains of spoil, he left the mountain ranges and the ruins of the castles smoking behind him. To impress Christian and Assassin envoys who visited him during this march, he mutilated and then put to death five hundred Armenian captives.

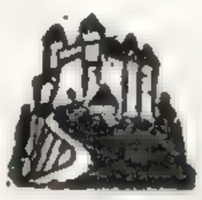
To his men, on the eve of the *jihad*, he issued a proclamation that Napoleon might have given out before a new campaign:

"The king of the French, the king of England, the emperor of Germany, and the Roman* emperor have marched against us aforetime. They have vanished like a storm chased by the wind. May they come again! May he come, the King Charles, and the Greek with him—and even the Mongol. We will enrich ourselves with their treasures, and will be glorified as victors in the holy war."

In spite of this challenge, Baibars did not wish to call down upon his head a general Crusade. He kept his fingers on the pulse of Europe through the Venetians, who now frankly made alliances with the Moslems; and he kept an eye on the doings of the Mongols in Persia through his spies. He had set his heart on clearing the Crusaders from the coast of the Holy Land—which Saladin had not been able to accomplish—and he planned deftly to do this without rousing Europe to a new Crusade.

To march against the formidable knights, who had been strengthening their network of castles from Jaffa to Antioch, was a task calling for the utmost care and skill. Glory was to be had, of course, in driving out the infidels, but hard knocks and little spoil as well. Baibars did not underestimate his foes in the slightest.

He wanted, of course, to round out his new empire by clearing the coast. But, more than that, he looked upon this task as a duty. The Panther, cruel and treacherous as the beast for which he was named, had a soul.



DURING his peregrinations Baibars had examined most of the Crusader citadels, and he knew the ground thoroughly. Some thirty fortified points confronted him, ranging from huge Antioch with its hundred thousand motley inhabitants, to the Krak des Chevaliers with its enormous walls and population of soldiers, to small citadels of the sea like Tyre, and isolated towers garrisoned by a few Templars or Hospitallers.

He made his plans to strike at the citadels, one at a time—by swift thrusts that depended upon surprise and weight of numbers and power of siege engines for rapid success. Like Hannibal, he had a varied but devoted host behind him, made up of trained Mamluks, Berber and Arab levies, with the negroes of the Sudan. Such a force, even more than Saladin's, was formidable in victory but undependable when checked for any time. And Baibars had all a Tartar's instinct for secrecy and swiftness of action.

The Crusaders knew when he led his army from Cairo for the first blow in 1265. Baibars marched rapidly north from Jerusalem, and they were watching for him around Acre when his black standards suddenly appeared before the small walled town of Caesarea in the south. His Mamluks stormed the outer wall, and set up their siege engines—brought up in pieces on camel and mule back—before the citadel, which held out for a week. The Panther turned over the castle to his men to plunder, while he worked with his own hands at razing the fortifications.

He had determined to destroy all the cities on the coast which had been rallying

*The Byzantine emperor of Constantinople.

points for the Crusaders. While two divisions of his cavalry overran Haifa and menaced Château Pèlerin just north of the lost Caesarea, Baibars turned south with his infantry and siege engines and invested Arsuf.

The knights, watching from the parapet while the Moslems set up their camp, noticed a solitary Mamluk, a tall figure in a long coat of mail that hung to his ankles and carrying a shield, walking without haste between the lines. The Moslems did not point at the wanderer, or display any interest in him while he inspected the foundation stones of the wall and the gate towers. Nor did the knights observe that he had one blue eye and one white eye.

They did see him, presently, working the siege engines, and when after a month Arsuf surrendered, they discovered him to be the Sultan. Baibars made the captives pull down the walls stone by stone, and—in spite of his promise to free them—paraded them in triumph into Cairo with their banners reversed and broken crosses hanging from their necks.

It was his way of bringing the fruit of the *jihad* to Cairo. And in the next year he had bloodier tokens to show—for the hill castle of Safed was beset, and when its weary Templars surrendered they were put to death, all but one who turned Moslem, and one who was spared to carry the tidings of the massacre to the remaining strongholds of the Cruaders.

To the exulting Mamluks, who had seen three citadels fall to them, this was a sign of victory. The end of the unbelievers was written in the book of fate, and what was written would come to pass. They felt assured that they were the instruments of fate, destined to reap with their swords the final harvest of Christian lives that would atone for all the past.

They did not realize that Baibars had blooded them carefully upon three of the weakest strongholds, and by so doing had intimidated the other citadels. While the Crusaders appealed for armed aid to Haython, the Mongols and the princes of Europe, Baibars consented to take fifteen thousand pieces of gold from Bohemund VI of Antioch, for a truce, while he went north to punish Haython for daring to support the Mongols.

A tale is told that he wandered incognito into the far distant country of Asia Minor, where at a roadside pastry shop he dismounted to eat fruit and cake. When he went out of the shop, he left his ring on a table. After he rejoined his army he sent a courier to the Mongol Il-Khan, explaining that he had lost his signet ring in a certain pastry shop belonging to the khan and asking that it be returned to him.

Even on the path of war, Baibars would have his jest. He was vastly amused, no doubt, the next year, when he heard that the Venetians and Genoese—their feud being then at its height—had fought a naval battle off the coast of the Holy Land. But he heard also that St. Louis, informed of the situation in Palestine, had taken the cross again and was assembling his second great Crusade.

THE NEWS spurred Baibars to make his real effort in the following spring—1268. In March he appeared without warning before the gates of Jaffa, the only town remaining to the Crusaders in the south. He stormed it, tore it down, and sent its marble columns back to Cairo to enrich a new mosque. While the human swarms of the alleys and the ragged watermen of the Nile chanted in admiration of the work of the triumphant king.

Baibars, with his armored horsemen, his creaking carts and camel trains, with his negroes herding captive Crusaders in chains, with frantic dervishes screaming an endless song of victory, climbed to the cold Lebanon and set up his engines before Belfort. The castle that had defied Saladin held out for only ten days, and the Sultan's eunuchs had new captives to scourge along the road.

Then the army went down to graze its horses and to reap the harvest of the fields of Banyas where the waters of the

Jordan come to the surface of the earth beneath a red cliff. And Baibars disappeared. *

A day or so later a party of envoys from the Sultan entered the double gate of Tripoli's castle and demanded speech with Bohemund VI, whom they called the count. They were led to the upper courtyard, where knights and men at arms gathered round them, and Bohemund made his appearance on a tower stairway. He had come down from his city of Antioch—that his ancestor the first Bohemund had wrested from the Turks nearly two centuries before. And two centuries of luxury, surrounded by Greeks and served by Syrians, had left their mark on the prince of Antioch who was Norman only in lineage. He had bought a peace from Baibars, but still, being fearful, he had journeyed south to Tripoli, his other city, to watch events.

The leader of the Egyptian envoys spoke to him boldly, addressing him as Count Bohemund, and accusing him of breaking the terms of the truce.

But Bohemund still had something of Norman pride, and he whispered to his chamberlain, who upbraided the envoys:

"Shape better your tongues or be silent. It is well known to all men that my lord is prince of Antioch, and by that title must you address him."

The Mamluk who was leader of the envoys glanced about him covertly and hesitated. Then he shook his head.

"Thus was the message given me, to Al Komasi, the count. And not otherwise may I say what was said to me."

The brow of the prince darkened, and he signed to his men at arms to surround the Moslems and seize them. As he did so, one of them, a tall groom who had been holding the horses, wandered over to the leading Mamluk. In so doing the groom touched the officer's foot, and the Mamluk spoke at once to Bohemund—

"*Yah Brens*—O Prince, content ye!"

The point was yielded by the Moslems, and their message delivered. While the talk went on, the tall groom continued his wanderings round the courtyard, staring up with his one good eye at the walls, at the weapons of the garrison and at Bohemund himself. When the prince of Antioch dismissed his visitors, the groom neglected to hold the stirrups of the Mamluks. He mounted a charger himself and rode off among them. And outside the gate of the town he rocked in the saddle, roaring with laughter.

"To the devil with all countships and princedoms!" he cried.

Baibars had added the part of a groom to his other rôles, and the experience amused him vastly. Perhaps it suggested to him what followed, or perhaps he had already planned it. He disappeared again from the valley below Banyas, but this time he took the pick of his army with him.

Two weeks later, at the end of May, a letter arrived at the castle of Tripoli for Bohemund. It was brought by an unarmed Moslem—not the Sultan in disguise this time—who disappeared after it was taken from him.

Bohemund, opening the missive, beheld at the foot of it Baibar's heavy signature. And when he had read it through he sat without moving or speaking, as if stunned by an unseen blow. When his companions knew the contents of the letter, amazement and sorrow kept them silent. The letter was the masterpiece of the versatile Sultan.

"Greeting to the Count," it began. "And commiseration upon his misfortune, inflicted by Allah, who hath deprived him of his princedom and left to him for consolation only his countship. Know, O Count, thou who believest

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*The amazing speed of the Panther's movements, as well as his genius for deception, rendered him invisible to the eyes of the harassed Crusaders.

In this spring he was before Jaffa, March 7—then superintended the rebuilding of Hebron with its great mosque—at Belfort April 5—Banyas April 25—arranged for a new patrol and courier system (a kind of mounted police and pony express combined) to be carried out by the nomad Turkomans—in Tripoli in disguise, May 1—captured Antioch May 15.

Antioch is some 500 miles from Jaffa by road. Baibars took Jaffa in 12 hours and Antioch in 30. Such maneuvering fairly outdid Saladin's greatest efforts. It took Saladin months to reduce Belfort, and three days to capture the outer wall of Jaffa, and he never ventured to besiege Antioch.

Baibars' rapidity of movement equaled some of the marches of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. It must be remembered that he had Tartars and central Asia Turks under him—he was one of the spectacular leaders of the new influx from mid-Asia that overwhelmed the hard fighting Crusaders, and—in the next century—swept over their lines into Europe itself.

thyself to be prince of Antioch, art not; for we are lord of Antioch, thy rich and fruitful city.

"Sword in hand, we swept through thy city on the fourth hour of Saturday, the fourth day of Ramadan. If thou hadst seen thy knights rolled under the hoofs of our horses! Thy palaces trampled by the plunderers who filled their bags with booty! Thy treasures weighed out by the heaviest weights! Thy fair women hawked in the streets at four for a dinar—and bought with thine own gold!

"If thou hadst seen thy churches broken in, their crosses shattered, their lying gospels tossed from hand to hand in the open under the sun, the tombs of thy noble forefathers overturned, while thy foes the Moslems trod upon thy Holy of Holies, slaughtering monks and priests and deacons like sheep, leading out the rich to misery, and nobles of thy blood to slavery!

"Couldst thou have seen the flames licking up thy halls—thy dead cast into the flames temporal while the flames eternal awaited them—the churches of the Apostles rocking and going down . . . Then wouldst thou have said, *'O God, that I were dust!'*

"Since no man of thine hath escaped to tell thee the tale, *I tell it thee!*"

In this way the Panther ended the dispute as to whether Bohemund was prince or count. He had written only the truth. His horsemen surprised the great city and stormed the hastily guarded wall that had been thought impregnable, and the gardens of the Crusaders were drenched in the blood of a fearful massacre. Eight thousand souls crowded into the citadel on the height above Antioch, and these were granted their lives.

The Moslems snatched from the burning city spoil almost beyond counting—gold was tallied by the vase full, and young girl slaves were handed about among the camelmen for five dirhems a head. The blow had fallen like lightning from a fair sky, and within a week Antioch was populated only by swarms of merchants and thieves, grubbing in the ruins and bargaining for spoil in the markets.

In the south the Crusaders heard the tidings with incredulity. But—except for the unfortunate Bohemund—it affected them little, since Antioch had grown apart from the Holy Land, generations before. They waited anxiously to learn where Baibars would strike next—he had lopped off the extreme south and the north of their line of citadels that year.

But in the next spring—1269—Baibars contented himself with some grim maneuvers. He vanished for awhile, allowing the report to be sent forth that he was dead. Apparently he had been criticized for his treachery in breaking his treaties with the Christians, and wished in this way to trick them into giving him cause for a fresh invasion.

Twice he failed to surprise the black stronghold of Marghab, held by the Hospitallers. Once he materialized without armor and with forty horsemen on the summit of the hill of the Krak, under the castle walls. He challenged the knights to come out to individual combat, and rode off again. He harvested the fields of the knights and staged a small triumph ornamented with Christian heads in Damascus. But in reality he was holding his army in readiness to meet the Crusade of St. Louis.

THE ENERGETIC Sultan, however, did more than await the coming of the French king. On learning the numbers and strength of the Crusade—which included the forces of Charles of Anjou, the chivalry of Navarre, and a small contingent of English led by their Prince Edward—he attempted to turn it aside and succeeded.

At Baibar's urging, the Moslem lord of Tunis wrote to St. Louis that he was prepared to aid the Crusaders against the Sultan, and inviting them to land upon the African coast in his territory. As evidence of his good intentions, he sent a large sum of money. Just how the intrigue was carried out, and how the king

was induced to sail to Tunis is not known. Suffice it that he went thither, as Baibars had desired, in July 1270.

Landing in that time of heat and dust, after the country had been desolated by a famine, St. Louis found that the amir of Tunis had betrayed him, and that the Moslems were in arms against him. The Crusaders pressed the siege of the white walled city, above the stagnant salt marshes, in spite of the dust storms that swept through their camps, and the bad water, and the harrying of the Berber clans who rode down from the southern hills.

Beholding them so situated, a poet of Tunis recalled the poem of victory sung at Cairo twenty years before, and he wrote:

"*O King of France, thou wilt find this land a sister of Egypt: prepare thee for what fate hath in store for thee here.*

"*Thou wilt find here the tomb, in place of the house of Lokman; and thy eunuch here will be the Angel of Death!*"

Fate added the gift of prophecy to the wit of the Moslem singer. Within a month the plague made its appearance in the Christian host, and the king was afflicted with his son who had been born in the stress of the terrible days at Damietta—and who was now entering manhood.

They carried the weakening St. Louis out to the shore, near the hills where once Carthage had reared its walls. Here, under the scattered eucalyptus and cedars, a breath of cool air came in from the sea. The king and his son lay on blankets, stretched on the brown wisps of dead grass and poppies under open pavilions.

The servants of the church ministered to them, but could not check the plague in the bodies weakened by dysentery. The son died before the father. And the day came when the thin form of the king turned on its side, and his voice was heard:

"God have mercy on these, thy people . . . and lead them to safety in their own land . . . O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"

Within a week the height over the red bluff was deserted. The Crusaders had left, taking with them the body of their dead king.

The Arab shepherds and the brown sheep returned to the shore, the muezzins called from the small towers in the white walled villages. The warriors of the tribes rode in, to look at the remnants of the Crusaders' camps, and lean dervishes pointed out the spot where St. Louis had died.

So the Crusade came to its end in vain —the last of the great Crusades.

SUCH were the tidings that reached Cairo and filled Baibars with infinite satisfaction. He himself had seen St. Louis in chains at Mansura, and now—thanks to the trap he had set for him at Tunis—the great king of the Crusaders was being carried to his tomb. The fire of the *jihad* seized upon the men of Cairo anew, and Baibars decided to break down the strongest outpost of the knights in the Holy Land.

In the spring, 1271, he led his terrible siege circus against the Krak des Chevaliers, the headquarters of the Hospitallers. For more than a century this square citadel of white stone had crowned the bare hills at the edge of the Assassin country. Unchallenged, even by Saladin, it had guarded approach to the Templar's little town of Tortosa and Tripoli on the coast.

Two weeks after Baibars set up his engines on the plateau where the stone aqueduct runs into the southern bastions of the Krak, the mighty citadel drew down its banners and surrendered, the surviving knights being allowed to go forth with their lives.*

*Baibars' invariable success in these sieges was due to the Mongol siege tactics he adopted. He had, of course, the best of engines, and from the moment of his arrival on the scene the attack was pressed, the fanatical Moslems making assaults at all hours while the engines opened a gap in the walls. The defenders were obliged to remain under arms constantly, harassed by smoke bombs and flame throwers. No aid could be expected from outside, and by now a sally was impossible in the face of Baibars' numbers.

The Templars and Hospitallers, with a few Teutonic knights, were the only military units now in the Holy Land: they were all in garrison, and they could not have mustered between them 10,000 men.

Baibars could, at need, put nearly 100,000 men in the field. His successor Kalawun, in 1280, met a Mongol and Christian army of 80,000 with superior numbers.

Baibers repaired the damage done to the walls, and placed an inscription with his name and the date of the capture upon one of the towers. He intended to use the great fortress as a base for future operations against the coast. And he wrote to Hugh of Revel, commander of the Hospitallers, announcing his achievement.

"To Brother Hugh: We will make clear to thee what God hath just now done for us. Thou didst fortify this place, and didst trust the guard of it to the choicest of thy brethren. Well! Thou hast done nothing but hasten their deaths, and their deaths will be thy loss."

The Panther was now the neighbor of his victim, Bohemund, formerly prince of Antioch and now merely count of Tripoli. With his Mamluks, the Sultan raided the fields of Tripoli, gathering in crops and fruits and sugar cane.

Bohemund, shut up within his castle at Tripoli, made the natural mistake of protesting that Baibars had broken the truce for which the count had paid anew. Baibars was not at loss for a reply.

"Nay, I have come only to gather in thy harvests, and the vintages of thy vines. By God, I hope to pay thee a like visit each year!"

Bohemund could do nothing but keep to the shelter of his castle, and later in the summer he received a second message from the Panther. The bearer of it brought also some heads of game which he said were a gift from the Sultan to the count. The second message was brief as the first.

"The rumor runs that thou hast renounced the chase, and darest not stir out of thy town. So we send thee these heads of game to console thee."

Bairbars, however, had not lingered near Tripoli. Swiftly he marched south with his circus and captured Montfort, the stronghold of the Teutonic knights on the breast of the hills within sight of Acre. After taking it, he decided to raze it to the ground, and the stout walls were pulled down, the stone scattered in the gorge.

Baibars' captures, apparently haphazard, had been methodical. First he had cleared the Palestine coast, as far as the strong point of Château Pèlerin; then he had swept over north Syria, seizing Antioch and the rich cultivated lands and the caravan roads to the coast. Then he had cleared the Crusaders from their last citadels in the line of the hills, so that only narrow strips of coast at Acre and Tripoli remained to them, and they had, actually, their backs to the sea. They could not ride inland for a half hour without coming among the Moslems.*

With St. Louis dead and the Armenians whipped off by the Panther's lunges, and with the princes of Europe turning a deaf ear to all appeals for aid—the spirit of the Crusade had been quenched at home by the quarrels of Popes and emperors—the Templars and Hospitallers in the surviving castles could only hope for support from the Mongols who had by now settled down in Persia. And the Mongol Il-khan announced that he would invade Syria again.

Baibars, who had been combing the Syrian Assassins out of their mountain nests—even out of Massiaf—heard the rumbling of the Mongol juggernaut from afar and was on the alert at once. During 1275 he watched the East without ceasing. For weeks his scouts quartered the edge of the desert. It is said that Baibars himself never went to his tent to sleep without fast horses ready saddled at his entrance. He slept in his clothes, even to his spurs.

But the Mongols, discovering that the Crusaders could not take the field to support them, turned north into Asia Minor. Baibars only came into conflict with one division of them, about 12,000 strong. For the second time he gained a victory, but was wounded in the fight.

Thereafter, the wound sapping his

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*They still held Marghab, overlooking the sea, and Tortosa, Sidon and Tyre, with Château Pèlerin—the last three being actually built out into the sea.

Baibars' plan was to destroy the coast ports, accessible to the Crusaders, and keep intact the hill citadels, to serve the Moslems. Of the places he razed—Safed, Caesarea, Arsuf, and Montfort—hardly a trace of the Crusaders' buildings remain. While the Krak, that he repaired, is almost intact and his memorial tablet distinct today. Belfort also is half preserved.

strength steadily, he withdrew into Cairo, occupying himself with building new palaces out of the spoils of the Christian cathedrals. He held Armenia safe, and in his last years he saw the Sudan added to his new Egyptian empire, with the Sherifs of Mekka and Medinah. He had rebuilt Saladin's empire and had raised up a kalif of his own in Cairo, before his death in 1277.

The Panther had been a fabulous and stormy figure—the Nemesis of the Crusades. He had filled the slave markets in Cairo with Christian captives, and had instilled into his people the certainty that the Crusaders were doomed. He had welded together the fugitive clansmen from the steppes, spewed out by the Mongol upheaval—Kharesmians, Circassians, Turks and Tartars. Out of these barbaric warriors he shaped a splendid army, which he handed down, with a well ordered empire, to his successor Kalawun.

To Kalawun, as the Barca had bequeathed the obligation of the war against Rome to Hannibal, Baibars had given the duty of driving the Crusaders from their last strongholds. The *jihad* must be fought to the end.

KALAWUN, a grim fighter, took up the sword without delay. But before he could strike, he found a new and terrible antagonist in his path. The Mongol Il-khan Abaka marched toward Jerusalem with the full strength of his horsemen, while the Christian Georgians and Armenians flocked down to the standard of the horde, and the knights rode out from Marghab to join them. Thirty thousand Christians marched with Abaka down the valley of Hamah in that autumn of 1281.

And on the wide plain by the lake Kalawun and his host of Egypt gave battle to the allies.

No one knows exactly what followed. The hard riding Mongols and Mamluks scattered over the plain—some of the Moslems fleeing headlong into Damascus with tidings of defeat. At the end of the day, however, Kalawun and his *halka* held the field, and on the next day he drove off the dispersed Mongols.

The Christian infantry was left stranded in this maneuvering of the mailed riders, and the Mamluks cut them to pieces during the long retreat to the mountains.

With the Mongols beaten back* Sultan Kalawun took vengeance upon the knights of Marghab for their alliance with the invaders from the East.

His army encircled the solitary peak of Marghab. For thirty-eight days his engines beat at the massive walls of black basalt, until the knights assembled at last in the great *salle*. They were cut off—from the towers nothing could be seen except Moslem *dhows* moving over the blue line of the sea and tiny caravans winding through the white chalk valleys beneath them. They had no longer any hope of aid and that morning the master of the Hospitallers surrendered the castle, while more than one man brushed the tears from his eyes.

Marghab had yielded. The Mamluks, entering the gate tower, looked about them and cried that only the angels of Allah could have prevailed over such a citadel.

Four years later Tripoli fell to them.

Except for the small seaports, only Acre remained to the Crusaders. And the Sultan prepared to move against it with his veteran army. Kalawun had ordered the timbers cut for the siege engines, and the sledges of rocks started on the road down from the hills toward this city of the Christians, when he fell ill. Already his armed host had marched forth and the desert folk were riding up from the plain—the White Slaves of the River rode stirrup to stirrup under the black banners, when the Sultan's litter was laid on the ground and he died.

But he had given command that he

*Two days before Christmas in 1299 the great Mongol Il-khan Ghazan marched west again from the Euphrates and decisively defeated the host of Egypt. For a time he held Damascus and Syria in his hands, but before then the Crusaders had been driven from the coast, and although the Armenian king Haython joined the Il-khan, Ghazan became weary of holding such a stretch of territory beyond his borders without aid from the Christians of Europe, and withdrew to his own frontier. His successors became Moslems and their long conflict with Islam was abandoned.

should not be placed in his tomb until the unbelievers had been driven from Acre. The *kadis* said he had been a martyr in the war for the Faith, and his son El Malik el Khalil took the reins of command, ordering the march resumed.

All the swordsmen of Islam thronged in, to join the march. They burned with eagerness to make a holocaust of the infidels, so that Kalawun might be placed in his tomb with due honor.

As they crossed the Gaza sands, the desert folk came in to the host, and the mullahs watching from Hebron could see the glow of the fires. By day the dust of their marching overspread the plain like a veil, when the dervishes ran beside the chargers, and the Arab women sang their exultation in the spoil to be taken. They sang as they marched, and the camel trains coming down from the hills cried a greeting to them.

For this was the day appointed, the day for the casting out of the unbelievers, and the final reckoning, wherein the faithful would taste of martyrdom, or of honor and riches.

So the readers chanted to them, while the camels snarled by the thorn bush, and the chargers stamped restlessly in the lines beyond the fires.

"*Lo. The day of Severance is fixed; the day when there shall be a blast on the trumpet, and ye shall come in crowds; when heaven shall open its portals . . . for the faithful, a blissful abode—gardens and vineyards . . . and damsels with swelling breasts, and a full cup!*

"*On this day the Spirit and the Angels shall range themselves in order, speaking no word.*

"*The sure day! The day on which a man shall see the deeds which his hands hath sent before him, and the unbelievers shall say, 'O—would that I were dust!'* "

AS THE débris of a storm, washed down from the hills, gathers in a pile on the plain, the remnants of the Crusaders filled the walls of Acre, in that month of March, 1291.

Most of them had journeyed hither from the hill castles, bringing what goods they could carry with them; the richest of them owned palaces in the suburbs, surrounded by iron grillework and ornamented with windows of colored glass. Here dwelt the members of the great family of the Ibelin and the *émigrés* from Palestine, with the prince of Galilee, and the lords of Outremer.

In the streets of Acre, between the massive walls of the buildings, all of one height and of the same yellowish stone, rode the Templars and Hospitallers who had been driven from their castles. Under silk awnings Syrian merchants had their stalls, carrying on a brisk trade in fine carpets and precious stones. And the Genoese and Venetian merchants, guarded by their men at arms, haggled over bargains avidly. Galleons crowded the port.

Some of the barons were sending their families out to Cyprus, but most of them kept to their houses in Acre, unwilling to believe that the city would be lost. The streets were gay, the taverns thronged. Feasting kept up far into the night. Gorgeous prostitutes were seen entering the portals of the palaces, attended by black slaves. Syrian and Greek girls filled the upper rooms of the wineshops and laughed from the windows.

Acre was wakeful, alive with a feverish excitement bred of uncertainty. Pavilions stood under the poplar trees of the square between the cathedral and the Hospital. Rumors could be heard in every corner and courtyard, and the galleys coming in from the home ports brought new tidings.

Men said that the Pope, Nicholas, had sent out a fleet, while others insisted that no more than a handful of Italian soldiery had been sent, who had already become breeders of trouble . . .

It was true that the Sultan Kalawun had died, and this might be the miracle . . . There were not ships enough to transport a quarter of all these people to Cyprus, if the Moslem host appeared and laid siege to the city.

In the *salle* of the Hospital, under the carved stone arches, the commanders of the city discussed other tidings. The patriarch and the masters of the orders were in charge. They knew the peril in which they stood, and saw only one chance of succor.

A certain Genoese, Buscarel by name, had brought letters from the Mongol Il-khan, Arghun, to the Pope. The Il-khan said that he was about to invade the Holy Land. But he demanded an army from Europe to cooperate with him —and no such army was preparing. A converted Mongol, Chagan, had brought a second missive, still more pressing, from the Il-khan. The only response Nicholas had made was to urge Arghun to be baptized. Meanwhile, no one knew what the Mongols were doing.* And the Moslem host was on the march.

King Henry arrived from Cyprus, and the muster roll of the Crusader families was complete. For these few days they were united, in all splendor of their small courts, in all the careless indolence that had fastened upon them, generation by generation.

With their wives and courtesans they gambled and feasted—anything to drown suspense and gnawing fear—in the moon-lit roof terraces where the breath of the sea tempered the lifeless air. The whine of fiddles, the cries of jesters, the modulated voices of minstrels, kept them from thinking of the future. They fingered the dice cup and the wine goblet, and let the hours pass uncounted.

Restless and quarrelsome they were—degenerate if you will—yet they kept to their trysting place, lords and knights, fair ladies, and somber monks—mild nuns and insolent courtesans—bearded patriarchs and heedless minstrels, they gathered for the last time in feverish gayety, to await death—and it came.

It came in mid-May, after weeks of siege, with the thudding of four-score engines, the cracking of boulders against crumbling walls, the flash and roar of exploding naphtha, and the ceaseless summons of the drums. The drums on camel-back, scores of them, that dinned and thundered through the hours.

Through the gardens of the suburbs, over the smoking ruins of the outlying palaces, surged the host of Islam. Marabout and *hadji*—Mamluk and negro, roared in exultation. The pavilions stretched to the hills. Oil, poured in the blackened ground, and fired by eager hands, sent a smoke screen rolling toward the broken battlements, where the moat had been filled in by columns of beasts of burden, driven forward laden with fagots and slaughtered at the ditch. Beyond the ruined moat a breach of sixty yards opened in the wall, and weary swordsmen of the garrison, blinded by the smoke, waited for the assault to come, while flights of arrows swept over them.

The Templars who stood there had regained the breach after one onset, but there was no one to relieve them, and they waited, listening to the diapason of the drums, and the songs of the dervishes behind the smoke.

Through the night the men of Islam made ready, mustering in four waves; the first carrying heavy wooden shields, the second caldrons of oil and torches, the third bows, the fourth short, curved swords. And behind them, the regiments of horsemen. Among them, in the half light before dawn passed the white robed dervishes carrying long knives, who would lead the way. Verily, sang the dervishes, Allah had paved the way and had shrouded them with a mantle—for a heavy mist lay along the shore and upon the line of the wall, and the very sea had risen against the unbelievers, so that it barred the unbelievers from flight, tossing their ships in its grip, and delivered them to the swords of the faithful.

The drums pounded their summons, and the cymbals clanged—the dervishes began to scream and run through the mist. After them advanced the first wave of the attack.

A roar of triumph sounded from the wall, and the oil flared up through the

*After waiting two years, Arghun began his preparations for the move against Egypt, but he died in March 1291, at the same time Acre was besieged.

mist, showing the leaping figures of men, and the dark masses that surged toward the flames. The clatter of steel sounded faint against the monotone of the drums—and fainter still as the swordsmen were driven from the breach.

When the sun broke through the mist, the Moslems were within the breach. And then the tumult, that had died down, sprang up anew. The master of the Hospitallers with his knights had charged the Moslem waves and thrown back the attack.

Then, with a measured tread, the armored regiments of Mamluks advanced, over the ruined moat, over the piles of bodies and the broken engines, pressing back the wounded knights, forcing their way into the streets, surging around the bands of Christians who tried to beat them off. And behind the Mamluks the Sultan's cavalry rode into Acre.

The drums ceased.

Acre had fallen, but for hours and days the Crusaders fought, the master of the Hospital, begging his men to set him down as he was carried off, wounded . . . The Patriarch, led on board one of the galleys that soon filled with fugitives, until the heavy swell swamped the overweighted boat, and all within it went down . . . The Dominicans gathered together, singing *Salve Regina* as they were cut down. . . .

The Templars, holding out in their house upon the sea, until the last boats had got to sea or had been captured, and then surrendering . . . The knights, disarmed, staring at the exultant Mamluks and negroes who swarmed into the great fortress, tearing the garments from young girls and laughing as they befouled the altars—until the knights, with their bare hands, turned on the despoilers and slew them, throwing their bodies out of the embrasures, and closing the doors against the Moslems without. And with their hands they defended their house, until fire and steel overcame them, and the last man ceased to breathe . . .

It was the end.

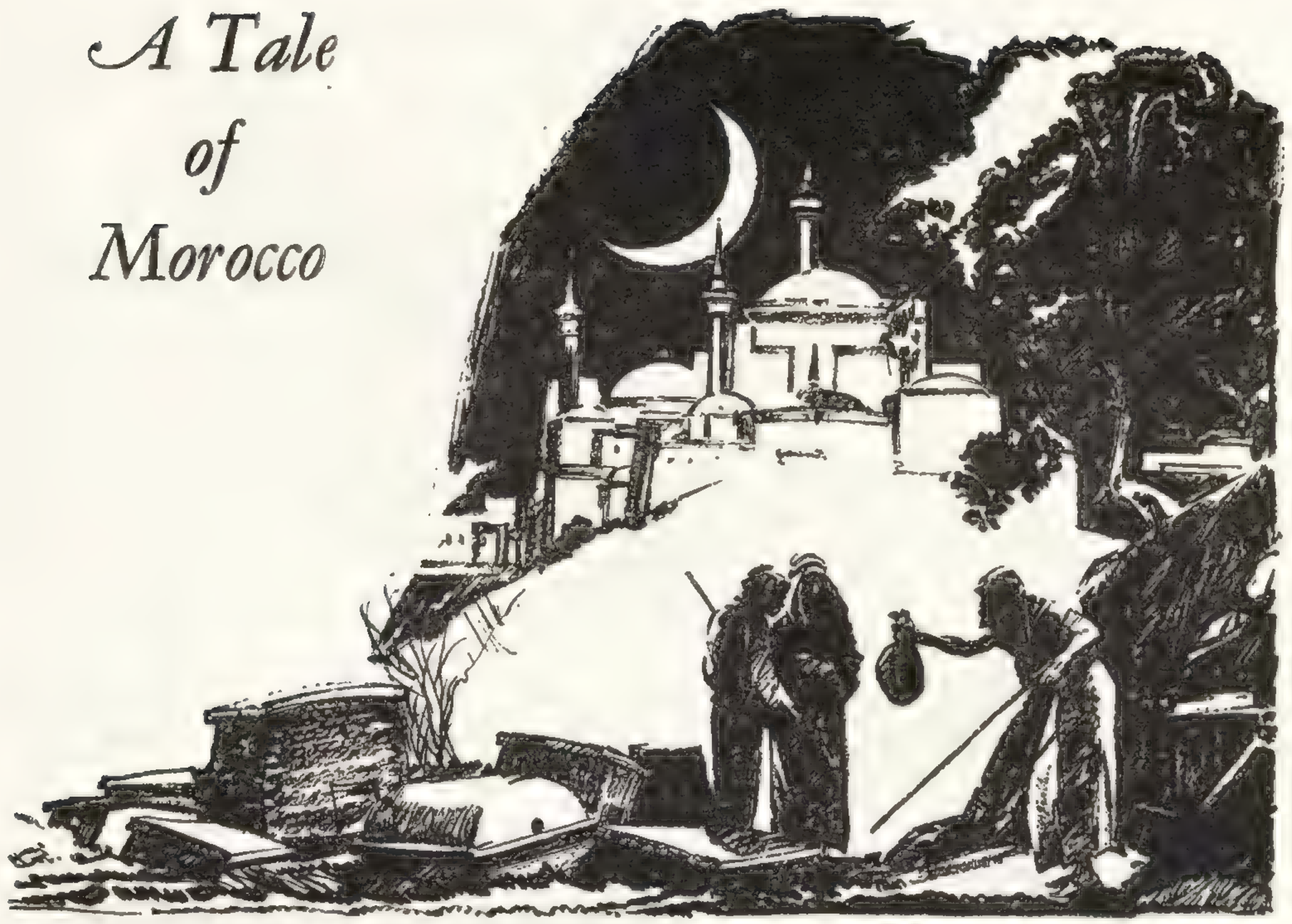
By courier and pigeon post the tidings spread through the land of Islam. Thirty thousand infidels had fallen to the sword in a single day at Acre. The bodies of the Templars had burned in the black towers. Elsewhere, in the little seaports, the unbelievers were fleeing—the mighty Acre had fallen, and they were helpless and afraid.

Deserted were the halls of Château Pèlerin—the swordsmen of Islam walked unhindered through its gates. The last ships were leaving Tortosa where the cathedral stood empty as a house that has lost its master, and the hymns of the Nazarenes were heard no more.

The last ships had gone out to sea, and their sails had vanished under the sky. So said the messengers of Islam, and the camelmen upon the Bagdad road. And the *kadis* cried to the multitudes that the *jihad* had triumphed.

Along the coast of the Holy Land, the bodies of the Crusaders lay drying in the sun heated ditches, or in heaps of charred bones. The only living Crusaders were the captives, sitting in rags on the rowing benches of the galleys, or limping under burdens in the alleys of Cairo. Down in the lifeless air of the Dead Sea, their bare feet stumbled over the stones and burning sand. If they raised their eyes, they beheld far above them, remote under the blazing sky the ramparts of Jerusalem, where once they had ruled as lords.

A Tale of Morocco



BASHA'S TREASURE

By GEORGE E. HOLT

AL-LATEEF the Clever One and young Aidomar, his brother, knelt upon their crimson prayer rugs, which were spread in the sunny patio of one Hadj Hassan, in their midday adoration of Allah the Merciful and Compassionate, when their friend and host, the *hadjji*, swished his robes through the latticed doorway. His venerable white bearded face bore a look of concern; his yellow heel-less slippers moved more swiftly than was their wont.

At sight of the prostrate worshipers, the *hadjji* paused abruptly. What affair of this world is of sufficient importance to intrude upon the devout thoughts of those who kneel with their faces toward the East and declare the existence of but one God?

The *hadjji* was well aware that both the worshipers had much reason to be grateful to that Allah who had so consistently spread about them the mantle of his protection. Had it not been for that divine and impregnable garment, assuredly Al-Lateef would not now be proclaiming "*Allah akbar! Allah akbar! There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet,*" in the sunny patio in Fez. Only a little while ago had he not dragged his brother Aidomar from the very jaws of the basha's lions, an incredible feat possible only to one made marvelously strong in body, mind and spirit by the inspiration of Allah's approval?

And before that, had Al-Lateef not made his escape from Tangier under the very nose, literally, of the basha who was hunting him, and whom Allah caused to give the order for this lunatic who proclaimed himself loudly to be Al-Lateef the Clever One, to be put outside the city walls? And before that—and before that . . .

Venerable Hadj Hassan shook his bearded head in silent amazement at the epic nature of the life of the man Sanhajji upon whom the world had conferred the sobriquet of Al-Lateef the Clever One. An epic brought into being by those enemies of Al-Lateef and his family, who had almost exterminated that family, and who were resolved to send Al-Lateef and Aidomar upon the same path the others had been made to take. Once a respectable but unimportant public official, Al-Lateef was now an outlaw, with a huge price upon his brown head—but he was so important that many a man looked up to with awe by the populace could not sleep of nights for fear of him.

Immediately the prayers were ended, Hadj Hassan hastened toward his guests.

Al-Lateef heard the footsteps, looked up at the face of this man who was risking his own head to give sanctuary to him and his brother, discerned the perturbed look, and rose swiftly.

"Come with me," muttered Hadj Hassan. "There is news. Let the brother remain."

But Aidomar, with that respect for his elders which is inherent in the well disciplined youth of Morocco, had already gone to the far side of the patio, out of earshot of whatever they might have to say, and had squatted in the sunshine.

Inside the house, in the room to which Hadj Hassan led, host and guest seated themselves upon a huge floor cushion covered with crimson silk, and Al-Lateef's eyebrows were twin questions.

"Catastrophe for a friend of ours," said the *hadjji*. "Kaid Matoogi is no longer basha of this, our red city of Fez."

"Matoogi deposed?" exclaimed Al-Lateef, "And—"

"A captive in the city prison. Under sentence of death. His enemies have succeeded in turning the Sultan against him."

A little space of silence, while the two friends of the deposed basha gazed at each other. Then the older man spoke again.

"But from his prison he has managed to send me a message. A message for you."

"For me!" cried Al-Lateef, truly startled. "So he knew I was here; knew that you were giving me sanctuary. Let friendship—" he paused. Hadj Hassan completed the thought:

"Let friendship bar the path of duty. Yes. As the Sultan's basha of Fez, knowing that I had given you sanctuary, he should have seized us both. I owe him a debt I can never repay. I am an old man, and strength and courage have gone from me. Yes, he knew, and held his hand."

"I," said Al-Lateef, gently, "have but half your years. I have strength. I am not held to be a coward. Command me. Your debt to Matoogi is no greater than my own."

"The message," repeated Hadj Hassan, "is for you."

"And that message?"

"He desires the impossible, I fear."

"Nevertheless, it shall be accomplished," said Al-Lateef. "Tell me."

"He desires that you try to see him in prison, in order that he may say something to you which can not be entrusted to another. But to see him in prison! It is—"

"It is—possible." Al-Lateef nodded. "Not an easy problem, *Hadjji;* nevertheless, most of the things of which the mind of man can conceive can be accomplished. Does Matoogi say when?"

"Quickly, Al-Lateef. He says quickly. The sentence of death. You understand."

"*Aiwa*, I understand. Of course. Perhaps a week hence; perhaps an hour." He rose swiftly. "My brother remains here, under your protection, if you will." The old man nodded. "As for myself— I go to the prison, I shall find a way to speak to Matoogi. And so farewell, my friend." He strode from the room. The words of the old man followed him. "God go with

you, my friend. To Allah all things are possible."

Easy to say. Easy to say. But—but—but . . . So ran the thoughts of Al-Lateef. For him, a hunted man, with a price upon his head, to enter the Fez prison, hold converse with a man condemned to death and get away . . . But beneath the weight of his problem there was one clear, unchanging decision; he would assuredly make the attempt. That was for the sake of Kaid Matoogi and Sidi Hassan and the hand of friendship. He would do his best to be successful. That was for the sake of his own brown head—and the boy Aidomar, to whom he now was guide and protector.

THE APPEARANCE of a new marabout, or holy man—saint, if one wishes to be somewhat liberal—in a Moroccan marketplace is always the signal for the assemblage of the idle to hear what he has to say. Marabouts are numerous, but each has some honor even in his own native district; this honor increases, however, in direct ratio of the square of the distance from one's native locale. Hence it is advisable to come from as far places as one's geography permits.

Perhaps an hour after Al-Lateef left the house of Hadj Hassan, word was being passed from mouth to mouth in the marketplace that a marabout from far Timbuktu was holding forth at the Marraksh gate. Those who went to ascertain the truth of these reports found them to be accurate. In the center of a crowd at the gate a strange marabout was holding forth in shrill tones, waving his arms, pausing now and then for the inevitable grunt of agreement from his audience.

In appearance this marabout was elderly, ragged and extremely dirty—all excellent evidence of his holiness. A huge green turban, worse for wear and weather, encircled his head. His short gray beard was stained with yellow dust and gray ashes and a suspicion of food droppings. His eyes were set deep in the dark hollows of asceticism and glowed with fanatical fervor. His bare arms and legs were baked by a thousand suns. The slippers which encased his feet were the enormously heavy sort which camel drivers fashion out of camel hide to protect their feet from the desert sand and stones; slippers which have a durability enabling them to be bequeathed from father to son, even unto the seventh generation.

The country *djellab* of brown homespun was a coat of many patches as well as of many colors; a long bamboo staff, iron tipped, completed the picture—save for the crazy facial contortions, the wild swingings of the staff, the jerky movements and jumpings about of the marabout's body as he screamed his message unto all and sundry.

All marabouts have a special message, particular unto each himself. One's inspiration and religious duty may be to pick up loose cobblestones so that horses may not stumble. Another may chase flies from babies' eyes. A third may continually shout a verse from the Koran.

This particular marabout's purpose, directed by Allah himself, was to see to it that men who unfortunately had been cast into prison for this, that and the other thing, did not add to their misery by forgetting their five daily prayers to Allah. These prisoners, throughout all Morocco, averred the marabout at the top of his lungs, had been placed in his keeping by the One God: upon him had been placed the duty of reminding them of the way of salvation whenas their minds might be heavy and forgetful by their unfortunate conditions. From the far south, he told his rapidly increasing audience, had he come, from distant Sus, visiting every prison along the interminable way. Now he had reached Fez, and to the unfortunates in the Fez prisons was he about to take his message.

It was a message which appealed to his crowd of listeners. This was evinced by their nods, the grunts—even an occasional shout—of approval. Fundamentally an emotional lot are the Moors, especially so where religious impulse is concerned.

"I go, then," shouted the marabout,

waving his great staff. "To the prison. To the prison, so that Allah's creatures may not forget that which is due Allah."

He stamped away in his great slippers. The crowd followed; that was inevitable. It augumented as it proceeded. It was double by the time the prison was reached. It swarmed about the gates.

The several guards on duty outside the closed portals held guns in readiness, demanded information.

"A holy man," they told him. "A very holy man from far Timbuktu." They explained his purpose in life. Then the marabout himself took up the argument.

"I shall enter," he shouted. "No one dare oppose the word of Allah, which I carry to those who are denied mosque. Open the gates for the servant of Allah."

Now, the word of a holy man, the person of a holy man, the entire idea that a holy man stands for has a weight, an effect, which is difficult for the Western mind to understand. Whether a bishop could walk into an English jail, or a cardinal into an American prison, on his own unsupported demand, is a question; certainly the average clergyman would have difficulty in accomplishing such a matter. But in the land of the Moors conditions are different. The marabout's own activities proclaimed him a holy man; his green turban proclaimed him a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed (and such he was, being a *shariff*), and whatever may be demanded in the name of Allah by such a one is most infrequently refused.

One of the guards rapped thrice upon the great doors.

"After all," he thought, but did not say, "after all, no harm is done by letting one enter a prison. The responsibility of permitting him to depart will not be mine."

The gates swung open.

"The blessing of Allah upon you," cried the marabout, striding into the prison courtyard. The gates crashed shut behind him. Al-Lateef had entered the prison of Fez.

This particular prison was built like almost every other prison in the country, a big rectangular building, one story, with a cobbled courtyard in the middle. Entrance to the courtyard was through the gate cut through the building itself. And from the courtyard the various sections of the edifice could be conveniently reached.

Now Al-Lateef was perfectly aware that whatever went on outside the gates was overheard by the guards stationed immediately inside. Hence he knew that they knew his mission. Wherefore, as soon as the gate had closed behind him, he turned to them and loudly and positively demanded that he be given access to the unfortunate prisoners, in order that, in their trouble, they would not lose sight of Allah.

The guards looked at each other.

"He is," said one, less reverential than the others, "crazy, like all marabouts."

"Nevertheless," a companion corrected him, "it is written that in the head without a mind, Allah dwells. And his mission is a worthy one." He turned to the marabout. "Come with me, *sidi*, to the kaid, and we shall see what he has to say about thy mission."

The guard stamped away, Al-Lateef following.

The kaid was sitting at ease on a floor cushion in his cubbyhole of an office. The guard addressed him from the arched doorway. Al-Lateef placed himself within sight of the official, behind the guard, muttering Koranic references to the obligation of worship. The kaid heard the guard, gave the marabout a searching glance, waved a hand in assent.

"Prayers will not hurt my prisoner," he said, with dry humor. "Go with him, Mustapha. When he is finished, put him outside."

Al-Lateef followed the guard, who led the way across the courtyard, unlocked a heavy door, bade the marabout enter.

For a fraction of a second Al-Lateof hesitated. His plan was working out, but—was there a weakness in it? Was he walking into a trap from which the exit would be a firing squad?

Traps were easy to enter—that is what made traps of them. But the getting out! Nor could he turn back now without exciting curiosity, suspicion, investigation. Well, the mantle of Allah's protection was about him, or it was not about him. In the first instance, nothing could injure him; in the second nothing could protect him. Forward. He stepped across the threshold . . .

"Summon me when thou art finished, *sidi*," said the guard respectfully. "I shall sit here and wait for you. The smells within—" He finished his sentence with a shrug, and closed and locked the iron barred door behind the marabout. Then he seated himself upon the cobblestones to wait. "Truly he must be a very holy man," he reflected. "Only the service of Allah could induce one to breathe such smells."

AS THE gate clanged behind him, Al-Lateef lifted up his voice in exhortation to the several dozen prisoners sitting or lying about in the one room. It was a big room, but badly lighted and worse ventilated. There were no windows; all the air came through the iron barred door. And all the light; so that the far side and corners of the room were in semidarkness.

Exhorting them that the name of Allah the Merciful and Compassionate, the Dispenser of Justice, be not forgotten in their hour of trouble, Al-Lateef looked keenly about. From face to face his gaze went, searching. And at last he saw that which he sought—the face of Matoogi, the former basha.

Matoogi was squatting cross legged on the floor in a far corner, his white *djellab* wrapped closely about him. Dejection marked deep lines upon his brown bearded face. His hands were restless. His eyes looked at, but manifestly did not see, the marabout, and his fellow prisoners: they were turned inward, seeing pictures of a past which had gone forever, of a future which—which Allah himself only knew.

The marabout worked his way slowly toward Matoogi, bestowing benedictions here and there, exhorting regular prayer and thought of Allah. And ultimately he came to the place where Matoogi sat, still absorbed in his inward reveries. He stood looking down upon him. Then he turned to the few who sat nearby.

"Who," he demanded, "is this one, of manifestly high position, who has become a prisoner?"

"It is Sidi Matoogi," voices answered. "He who yesterday was basha of Fez, and who today is sentenced to die."

"To die!" exclaimed the marabout, raising his hands. "Only Allah sentences to death; only Allah may say when the time of death is— Move away, friends; move ye to a little distance, so that I may speak to this unfortunate and bring to him hope of Allah's protection. Away."

They moved back quickly; assuredly Sidi Matoogi had need of religious counsel.

The marabout stooped before the former basha, sat upon his heels and rocked slowly—until Matoogi's gaze became conscious of him. Then:

"It is written, *sidi*, in the Book it is written, that he who seeks aid of Allah shall have aid from Allah. Blessed be the name of Allah! From him only can come aid. From him only, and from no man, however clever he may be." He gave unusual emphasis to the word *clever*, repeated it, saying, "Even the most clever one—" he paused— "the most clever one—" a spark kindled in the eyes of Matoogi— "is impotent against the plans of Allah."

He saw recognition now, in Matoogi's eyes; nodded, as though indorsing his own preachings. And at that moment accident came to their assistance: at some incident in the courtyard outside, three or four of the other prisoners had risen and gone to the door. They cut off almost all the little light the room received. Al-Lateef leaned toward Matoogi.

"Yes, I am Al-Lateef. You sent for me. Speak."

A sigh of relief came from the prisoner.

"Allah be praised!" he breathed. "Now

I can face the rifles with tranquil spirit."

"Have hope, my friend," said Al-Lateef. "I came not only in answer to your summons, but to observe. Tonight your rescue shall be attempted. I have thought of a way."

But the prisoner checked him.

"There is something more important than my escape," he said swiftly. "I should never have sent for you to risk your own head to save mine; but I would have you risk your head to save my honor. Yes, my honor," he repeated.

Al-Lateef nodded. He understood that perfectly.

"This is why I desired to see you, why I could risk no message. Hidden in a secret place while I was basha—you know the place, no doubt—is a considerable treasure. Only a small part is mine. Of the rest I am custodian, trustee. Half of it belongs to our friend, Sidi Marani, who travels in Europe now. Nearly all the remainder I have been holding in trust for the children of my deceased sister. I can die, my friend; that is not so important; but if I die, and the means of subsistence of my sister's children, of my friend's fortune, are lost to them by my death —then am I disgraced. Wherefore, I desire to tell you where the fortune lies, so that it may in due course be given to its owners.

"Speak, then, *sidi*," responded Al-Lateef. "I shall do what I can. But also there is the rescue to be thought of."

"Lean closer," demanded Matoogi.

Al-Lateef complied. And with his ear almost touching Matoogi's lips, he learned where the prisoner had hidden a bag of rubies and other jewels. He was about to suggest a possible mode of rescue, when the doorway was suddenly cleared, light came again, and a voice summoned Sidi Matoogi to come forward to go before the kaid of the prison.

"Make haste!" bawled the guard.

Matoogi rose, as did likewise Al-Lateef. They went toward the door, which swung open; Matoogi stepped into the courtyard.

"Remember the name of Allah in thy distress," cried Al-Lateef, raising his hands. "Pray to him that he wrap the mantle of his protection about thee."

Matoogi strode away behind the guard; Al-Lateef turned to the man who had been assigned as his escort. The fellow saw him, yawned, arose.

"Dost thou now desire to visit another roomful?" he asked. "Or has the stench—"

"I think—" Al-Lateef made a wry face, licked his lips, gulped. "I think, *sidi*, with thy kind permission, I shall await the morrow. It is, as thou sayest—I think I am going to be very sick."

"For the love of Allah, then, *sidi*—outside! It is bad enough here now."

"Good! Good! But quickly!" gasped Al-Lateef.

The guard fairly ran toward the gate, which chanced now to be open to admit a newcomer. He thrust the marabout outside. Al-Lateef staggered along the wall; came to a little clump of bushes. Sat down. The guard nodded his head sagely as he turned back to his job.

"That perfume," he told himself, "would put the Evil One to rout."

AL-LATEEF, free of the fearsome prison smell and the still more fearsome stone walls and iron doors, filled his lungs with fresh air and shook from his shoulders the menace with which they had been weighted. Then, knowing that absence from that vicinity was the best protection, he shuffled away—but, while still within sight of the prison gates, paused several times to wave his staff and his arms and call loudly upon sinners to repent. Who knew what eyes might be watching?

But while he went through these actions, using such part of his head as was necessary for their proper accomplishment, the rest of his brain was busy with the next step necessary to the solution of the problem which he had partly assumed and partly had had thrust upon him.

Matoogi the unfortunate had summoned him. Very well, he had answered that summons in an amazingly short

space of time. Chiefly, he reflected, because he dealt with puzzles with his head instead of his feet. Every accomplishment requires certain procedure; the wise man does not jump off a cliff without knowing its height.

Matoogi, he reflected further, was a better man than he had supposed him to be. Perhaps he placed technical honor too high. Who could blame him if the treasure of which he was custodian was taken from him by force, through no fault of his own? Honor? By the ninety-nine sacred names of Allah, it was pride! And that Al-Lateef could well understand. But little difference between pride and honor, after all.

Matoogi was also brave. No question. There had been not the least wavering of his dark eyes when he had said:

"Save the treasure, Al-Lateef. Let me die."

The treasure, Al-Lateef considered, was now saved, to all intents and purposes. The great danger had lain in getting in touch with Matoogi, in learning where the treasure was hidden. When the prisoner had whispered the secret of the hiding place, Al-Lateef had felt at ease. He had thought that it would be concealed somewhere in the ex-basha's house: that house would be occupied by Matoogi's enemies, or at least well guarded, for the very reason that they would expect treasure to be cached there. That would make it difficult. To find the hiding place and get away with the jewels under the noses of the watchers would be difficult, dangerous, with his own life the forfeit for failure. But as it was—h'mph! A child could go and get the jewels in safety.

But although that problem was as good as solved, the perverse—and humorously inclined—head of Al-Lateef played with a problem which was not solved, which was as full of explosive as a rifle cartridge. He had done that which Matoogi desired done; now he could not resist the impulse to play a little game on his own account. The debt of friendship had been paid. Now he, Al-Lateef, as good as had a double handful of jewels in his *shakarah*. And a guide post in his head pointed out a queer road to take.

He made his way to the little booth of a letter writer, where he paid the writing fee, but himself inscribed the brief letter which he desired. Leaving the shop, he sought and found a horseboy in the street, gave him a copper coin, dispatched him with the letter. It was addressed to the kaid of the guards of the city prison.

This being done, Al-Lateef, the marabout, shuffled his way to the Bab-el-suk—the gate to the marketplace—and squatted comfortably in the shade to await a reply to his message, and to watch the falling of night, the popping up of little yellow lights, the preparations for rest.

The kaid arrived on foot, concealing himself beneath a rough countryman's *djellab*, the hood pulled down over his face. He found the marabout at the spot indicated in the note. He sat down beside him, wrapping himself closer in his *djellab*. He looked about, tried to see the marabout's face, spoke cautiously.

"I received your message, *sidi*. I—am interested."

Al-Lateef smiled inwardly.

"You will release Sidi Matoogi—permit him to escape, that is to say—in exchange for—knowledge?"

"Knowledge of the right sort, *sidi*," replied the kaid. "You—you really know—where the treasure—of Sidi Matoogi—is hidden?"

Al-Lateef, the marabout, smiled a little to himself at perception of the pauses which spaced the phrases of the kaid's question. He knew this man who sat beside him—not this particular specimen, but the type of which he was a true representative. Wherefore, he believed, he could know not only what words the kaid had uttered, but those which he had left unspoken—those which represented the little pauses in his question. Filled in with the unuttered words, it ran through Al-Lateef's head thus:

"You—and I wonder who you really are—you really know—and if you do, why don't you take it for yourself—

where this treasure—I wonder if it is sufficient to reward me well for betraying my trust—of Sidi Matoogi—surely as basha he had opportunity to acquire great wealth—is hidden? And why shouldn't I seize you and force you to tell me, without making a bargain with you, whoever you are?"

With an impulse of impish humor, Al-Lateef put his mind reading to the test; instead of answering the spoken question, he replied to the one he guessed was still in the kaid's mind.

"It would not be very profitable for you," he said, and grinned at his companion's involuntary start. "True, I probably should tell, under force, what I know, whereupon the present basha and his khalifa and a dozen other of your superiors would instantly divide the treasure among themselves, and you would not get sight of the faintest flicker of even the smallest ruby."

"Allah!" breathed the kaid. "This man is a clever one," he reflected—and hastened to deny the truth.

But the gun which hung beneath his shoulder reminded him of the reality of his former intention—although he had not clearly foreseen what the result of his seizure of the marabout would be. Now he saw.

"Well, then, what is your plan?"

"First, a question," replied Al-Lateef. "If you possessed jewels worth, perhaps, twenty thousand pounds sterling—" he heard the quick intake of his companion's breath—"twenty thousand pounds," he repeated, therefore, "would you remain captain of the prison guards, or should you travel in far places, as a gentleman of wealth and—"

"*Y'allah!*" exclaimed the kaid. "Be assured, *sidi*, I would travel. Far," he added, as an afterthought.

"Twenty thousand pounds should take one far," assented Al-Lateef.

"And your plan, *sidi?*" asked the kaid.

Al-Lateef told him.

For a space the kaid was silent—and Al-Lateef read his thoughts as though they had been spoken. Proved it.

"The shrine of Sidi Cassim," he said, "is, as you know, situated on flat land; desert land. There are no trees, except, if I mistake not, one ancient olive at the shrine itself. There is no place to hide even one man, let alone a group. Sidi Matoogi's friends would scarcely select such a spot if they desired to ambush you and free Matoogi. Moreover, that you may be quite safe—" he gave the word the slightest contemptuous accent— "I suggest that you bring a detail of your soldiers with you. You could leave them at a little distance—within easy call if—if you should become frightened. And the protection of the Marraksh gate could be reached in a minute or two, if one ran swiftly. Besides that—"

"Enough," said the kaid shortly. "*Y'allah!* Do you take me for a coward?" He rose abruptly. "I shall be there at the appointed time."

Al-Lateef also arose, laid a detaining hand upon the kaid's arm.

"Remember, *sidi kaid*," he said, "that if I am betrayed, I shall tell where the jewels are hidden. But I shall not tell you. If you should decide that you do not want to travel far—if you should feel that your duty to—"

"Bah!" exclaimed the kaid. "Duty! For twenty thousand pounds I would forget my duty to Allah himself. As for my chiefs—" He made a gesture which was an insult.

"Good, then," said Al-Lateef. "I thought," he ventured, "that you were a man of intelligence, to whom the path of duty was indicated by his own benefits." The kaid caught some of the sting of the words, words which Al-Lateef had deliberately spoken as his final test of this man upon whom the life and fortune of Sidi Matoogi now depended. But he did not grow angry.

"Twenty thousand pounds," he said blasphemously, "would have caused the Prophet himself to have a revelation concerning duty. I shall be at the appointed place at the appointed time. *Selaama, sidi.*"

Al-Lateef watched him until he disappeared in the shadows.

"He is worse than I judged him to be," he told himself. "I think that the head of Sidi Matoogi begins to sit more firmly upon his shoulders. And now to attend to a few details."

AN HOUR later, during which hour Al-Lateef had called upon a certain friend in the city, and had paid an unobtrusive visit to the white shrine of Sidi Cassim, where he was to meet the kaid later in the day, Al-Lateef repaired to the home of Sidi Hassan, consumed a bowl of *kesk'soo* with broiled chicken, and attended to some necessary matters.

Thus he looked to the working order of the automatic pistol which hung in a shoulder holster beneath his right arm, made himself certain of the condition of another automatic which he dropped, with clips of cartridges, into his leather *shakarah*—the big leather bag which hung beneath his ragged *djellab*—reassured himself as to the small chamois bag of stones which was also in that *shakarah*, and at last went forth into the African night.

Sidi Hassan and Aidomar had bidden him godspeed; but to neither had he told of his afternoon's work, nor had he spoken of what lay before him. In another hour Matoogi would be a free and happy man —or Matoogi and Al-Lateef would be lying near the shrine of Sidi Cassim, their sightless eyes staring up at the cold stars. In the former case, there would be plenty of time to explain what he had been doing; in the latter—the book would be closed.

The city lay under a blanket of night, was not yet asleep, but resting. Al-Lateef followed a street which led him to the Marraksh gate, was permitted to pass by the two guards on duty there—any one might go out of the city (unless some unfortunate was being sought by the authorities and the gates ordered closed against his escape); only those who came in were questioned, and then only most casually, in times of quiet.

Outside the walls Al-Lateef turned to the west, made his way across the bare ground, perhaps an eighth of a mile, toward the white shrine of Sidi Cassim, gleaming in the starlight. Reaching the shrine he circled it, found nobody. He tried the ancient oaken door, found it locked as he had expected, because the shrine was open to pilgrims only on one day a week, and this was not the day. He looked about, turning on his heels. Eastward the faint glow of lanterns at the Marraksh gate, a little break in the dark line of the walls that ran in both directions from it. Then he squatted upon the grassless ground, found and lighted a cigaret, and waited.

The butt of the cigaret still glowed like a firefly on the baked earth when the watcher saw motion at the gate. First a squad of five uniformed soldiers, carrying rifles, came through. They were immediately followed by two riders, who, having passed the gate, took the lead, the squad of soldiers falling in behind them. One of the riders was the kaid. Of that Al-Lateef was certain, even at that distance. The other one was—Matoogi? Al-Lateef could not tell. The second rider was wrapped to the eyes in a white *k'sa*, over which he wore a dark *sulham*, the hood over his head. It might be Matoogi; it might be anybody.

Well, he thought, amused, the kaid had proclaimed himself to be a brave man, but he had taken precautions. Five of them. Armed with rifles. But, on the other hand, he had risked something, if the second rider were Matoogi. If there *had* been a surprise awaiting him, if the friends of Matoogi had outwitted him, if he had to fight for his life, if he lost the prisoner whom he had thus unwarrantably taken from the security of the jail, the kaid's future would be no bed of roses. Short shrift, and a firing squad. Subordinates do not lose great treasure for their superiors without paying for it.

At a distance of a hundred paces the kaid gave a sharp order to his squad. They stopped, lined up, grounded their rifles and rested upon them. The kaid spoke rapidly to them. Al-Lateef could

not overhear what he said, but he guessed what it was. Any summons from the kaid, a blast from his whistle, would bring his soldiers on the run to his relief.

Then the kaid and the man in the *k'sa* rode swiftly to the shrine, and Al-Lateef was satisfied that the kaid had given up the idea of possible ambush, of treachery. But before coming to a stop, the kaid gave spurs to his horse, galloped entirely around the shrine, making certain that no one was there concealed. Then he drew rein, dismounted, and aided his prisoner—who Al-Lateef now saw was indeed Matoogi—to do likewise. The horses he hitched to a ring in the wall of the shrine.

Al-Lateef stepped forward.

"I am here, *sidi*," said the kaid, "and here, also, is your friend."

But Matoogi recoiled as from a snake.

"Al—" he began the sharp cry of Al-Lateef's name, caught himself, changed the utterance to "Allah!" His face hardened, his eyes gleamed with angry surprise, resentment.

"So this is why I have been brought here!" he cried harshly. "But let me know the worst. If it is treason! But perhaps—" He stumbled to a stop, searched the pseudo-marabout's face for reassurance.

But that face remained stern, looked away. Al-Lateef could not meet the accusing eyes of his friend, even in the softening starlight.. The kaid spoke abruptly.

"Here is Matoogi, *sidi marabout*," he said. "Where is the treasure?"

"Then—then—Allah's curse upon you, you *have* betrayed me!" The prisoner raised his arms, awkwardly because of the rope that bound his wrists, plunged toward Al-Lateef, and struck. Al-Lateef parried the blow, and the kaid, with a backward sweep of his arm, thrust Matoogi away.

"Be quiet, dog!" he snapped. "Or you shall go back to your prison and to death." And to Al-Lateef, "The jewels, *sidi;* let us finish this business quickly."

But Matoogi, mad with justifiable anger, strode between them.

"Yes," he snarled. "Yes. Take me back. Away from this traitor whom I trusted. Summon your squad of soldiers; shoot me here and now. The one man in all the world—" he choked, both with anger and hurt. "Oh, Sanhadjji, Sanhadjji—" he gave Al-Lateef his rightful name—"who would have thought that you, of all men—"

"Enough," growled the kaid. "You are a fool, thrice a fool, Sidi Matoogi. Once a fool for desiring death rather than loss of your treasure; twice for cursing the friend, whoever he may be, who would prevent your virtual suicide and future complete damnation; thrice for not knowing when you are defeated and taking your fate like a man."

"Like a man!" cried Matoogi. "*Aiwa*, if you will but untie the bonds that hold my hands, I shall show you whether I am man or not. Let me, unarmed, but fight both of you, and I shall die happy. You, Sanhadjji—traitor to trust and friendship—you whom I protected at risk of my own head. Allah's curses upon you throughout eternity! And you, Kaid Tetwani, a bribed officer, deserting your office with stolen plunder. O Allah, but give me a moment!"

Al-Lateef's heart was heavy within him. Every word from the lips of his friend, from that friend to whom he owed his own life, cut him like the lash of a whip. Words sprang to his lips, to be sternly repressed.. He stiffened himself against what must follow. What *must* follow. It was the only way.

"Come," said Al-Lateef, then, and strode toward the ancient olive tree which for a hundred years had been guarding, with its gnarled arms, the shrine of Sidi Cassim.

The kaid seized Matoogi by the arm, forced him along in the wake of Al-Lateef. They came to the tree. Al-Lateef thrust his hand down near the roots, found a small hole which had been stopped with earth. Matoogi groaned. The kaid bent forward. Matoogi struck the bending man, felled him, leaped upon Al-Lateef. The marabout flung him off,

rolled over on top of him, pinned him to the ground. The kaid came to his aid. But now, as a beaten man, Matoogi lay silent, but stared up at his enemies with eyes of venom.

"Here," said Al-Lateef, handing a chamois-skin bag to the waiting eager hands.

Kaid Tetwani tore with trembling fingers at the cord which tied the bag, opened it, peered within. Little sparkles came forth. Suddenly the contents of the bag leaped into flaming color as the tiny pencil from an electric torch in the hand of Al-Lateef flashed upon them.

"*Allah kerim!*" the cry was wrenched from the lips of the kaid. "*Allah kerim!* A sultan's ransom." The light ceased. He thrust the bag into his *shakarah*.

A groan from Matoogi.

"Ride, then," snapped Al-Lateef.

"I go, *sidi marabout,*" answered the kaid. He strode to his horse, mounted, galloped over to his soldiers. "I shall return shortly," he told them. "Await my return."

Turning his horse, he galloped past Al-Lateef and Matoogi, who had now risen.

"Farewell, *sidi marabout,*" he cried. "I go on my travels. *Far.*" He galloped away toward the south, where lie the fastnesses of the Southern Atlas.

Al-Lateef unfastened the reins of the second horse, led it to where Matoogi stood trembling with anger.

"Here, *sidi,*" said Al-Lateef, "is an excellent horse. Eastward lie the hills where, as I know, you have friends. And here—" he held out his hand.

Matoogi turned away with a grimace of wrath, mistaking the gesture.

"What, I take your hand again? Rather a cobra, or a handful of filth."

"Here, *sidi,*" continued Al-Lateef, wincing, hand still outheld, "is a bag of jewels, a bag of jewels which occupied the hole in the olive tree before I replaced them with another bagful."

"What say you?" cried Matoogi. "You—you replaced them? I do not understand."

"Assuredly," said Al-Lateef, "you have not lived in Fez without knowing of the Jew, Bin-Atwil, who handles the products of the synthetic jewel factories of France. Well, one buys that stuff by the handful. Rubies, emeralds, sapphires, diamonds. Two handfuls were enough—Now take the real jewels, and your liberty, and ride, my friend."

"Oh Al-Lateef, Al-Lateef, my friend!" groaned Matoogi. "How could I have so misjudged?" But Al-Lateef cut him off sharply.

"You are not yet safe," he snapped. "Better ride at once. As for misjudging me; almost at times I misjudged myself. But it was necessary that you be kept in ignorance, so that you could play your part properly. You convinced the kaid that you were losing a fortune. Otherwise, he might have looked more closely at the stones with which he is riding so madly toward his dreams."

Matoogi swung into the saddle, now held his own hand out. Al-Lateef clasped it.

"Ride with me, my friend," said Matoogi. "This horse will carry two, to safety at least."

But Al-Lateef shook his head.

"My brother Aidomar awaits me in the city. We are safe for the present in the house of Sidi Hassan. And Sidi Hassan —" he paused to smile a little— "Sidi Hassan will be impatient to know whether I have been able to communicate with our friend Matoogi, in the city prison. So ride with Allah, *sidi; selaama.*"

"*Selaama,*" repeated Matoogi. "The blessings of Allah—"

"All things come from Allah," Al-Lateef interrupted him. "Wherefore praise ye Allah and not the instruments of his use. Now ride—swiftly!"

He watched Matoogi until horse and rider were swallowed up in the darkness of the south. Then he turned to stare for a moment at the file of waiting soldiers. Then he shuffled past them, came to the Bab-el-Marraksh, raised a hand in blessing upon the guards who waited there, and passed into the now sleeping city.

SATIN AND SCIMITARS

By F. ST. MARS

GEE, but that was some dash!

Ebon back; silver belly; forty-six-inch scimitar horns shaped to kill; horse maned; stallion necked; stag eyed; clean, razor edged hoofs . . . For the rest, legs of silk covered nickel steel, thin as hazel wands; eyes melting like dew; a carriage of hauteur and grace beyond compare—sure, but I tell you there was class in that layout. And the whole—the whole superb, charging, hurtling, concentrated compound of pride and dash, fight and fire and fury, stirred the wilderness under the style and title of bull sable, or *Hippotragus niger*, or harrisbuck, but now a whirlwind electrified, and by any name, a thoroughbred.

The hunting dog, who boasted that in the end he could run down and slay anything with cleft hoofs that lived on that continent, rolled three times in the choking dust and flying stones, and up sprang three springs and raced thirteen yards—all in one single movement and without a check. Then the antelope stopped.

He was not quite sure, that hyena-like wild dog, whether he was still whole or in parts; nor did he in the least understand how he came to be still alive instead of pulverized altogether.

He only knew that he had pursued an antelope as per custom, to tire it down, to chop pieces out of its flank—himself behind in safety—as it ran, until from loss of blood and fatigue, it fell at his mercy; and that— Well, here he was, don't you see? It had been rather like taking hold of the tail of a lightning flash, and something had happened. The antelope had turned, or something. The dog really didn't know. Only, the rest was a world whirling round, a six-inch hoof cut on his flank, a two-inch horn puncture on his neck, and so—!

Also the bull sable was there—thirty yards away checking the tail end of his charge in an acrid cloud of dust. Then he was not there!

He was halfway back, charging, and coming like the wind, the drumming of his clean cut hoofs beating a furious tattoo.

And then that wild dog went away. He was sorry to go—but, well, there is a limit even to the capacity of the most diabolical killing machine on four legs in Africa. Which he was, and that is saying a lot. Like some other people in this world I could name, murder, devilish and vile, was his profession, but not fighting. He loved life—his life.

After assisting the lean, loping, leering, long, hyena-like one to keep going on his way, the sable, the prince of all the antelopes, stopped. Killing was not his job, though fighting might be. He too loved life.

He watched the wild hunting dog dwindle to a speck, and from a speck to an evil memory, as the interminable *nyika*, the thorn scrub, swallowed him utterly. Then he spun about on his own heels and galloped off in the opposite direction. And you wonder why?

But those who know the wild hunting dogs of the Dark Continent will not. These canine plagues do not go alone. The cruel Fate that made them has decreed that there are always others, somewhere; unless, indeed, this happened to be the last straggler, or a wounded individual—for they do not kill or eat their casualties as the wolf people do—and that, in this case, was hardly likely.

Therefore the sable departed the spot—at the speed of the sable, which is no tortoise trot either; for he is one of the three swiftest antelope in Africa, and they are a swift tribe, scarce to be beaten by anything on four legs that lives, bar one. And that one was behind him, now.

Even as he flashed—there is no other word for it—in and out among the bushes (always thorny) he could hear, far away in the grim, endless *nyika*, the deep, long drawn howl like the second syllable of the cuckoo's call, that is the rally cry of the terrible Cape hunting dog; and the sound gave wings to his heels. It fair made one's blood run cold to hear it. The lone dog was calling the pack together. The pack that almost never left a trail without making a kill. The pack that never tired, never stopped, never spared. Heaven help you, sable.

THE SABLE, however, was helping himself. How that beast shifted. He did not merely gallop; he tore. He threw the miles behind as a man blows puffs of smoke over his shoulder. He ate up the map. Nor did the vile roughness of the ground, the everlasting thorns, hooked where they were not straight, four inches where they were not six, make any difference. He flew what he could not crash through; still I don't understand by what magic he failed to leave half his satin coat hung in strips upon thorns in his wake. He must have broken the back of quite a few records.

Ha! And you think that made any difference? You think *anything* could make any difference?

See! Within a few minutes, a head, short muzzled, round eared, brindled, shot up above the bush far behind. It had vanished again in an instant—the head of some dog beast leaping up to sight his prey, as terriers, ratting, leap in long grass.

Anon another head appeared, and then a third. Never more than that except now and then a bushy tailtip and just a head now here, now there, and silence. The cruel *nyika* hid the rest, but the heads were enough. They showed that the pack was on the sable bull's trail. The pack makes to the front and on flank; females to the rear; mothers behind.

The pack hunting in relays, each relay making the running, while the other fell back and recovered wind. The pack hunting by sight and sound, as well as by scent. The pack trained to perfect combination, under faultless, almost military control. Could anything hope to prevail against that? Few indeed. Even the prince of slayers, the leopard, who had watched the sable fly past with a snarl, got himself with almost undignified haste into a tree when he heard that eery cry break out way back. The lordly eland, even, heavy as an ox, big as a race horse, fled—as were all the other antelopes fleeing for miles in all directions, as they alone flee before fire, at the sound of that dread call. And finally, even the king lion himself, an old king, 'tis true, removed himself with suspicious and most unkingly speed from a thicket out of the line of the hunt, at that rallying pack call.

Everywhere everybody that was anybody in the wild world fled without shame out of the way, to get as far from the sable and his fearful hounds as possible, and not risk, even by the smallest chance, seeming to have any connection with him whatsoever, or to be even found anywhere in his vicinity. How human, and yet how natural. One of these would die for certain anyway, they knew that, those wild folk. Why risk more than one? Why indeed? They fled.

You see, the end of that hunt was known already to the hunters, and to the hunted; at least, they thought it was, for

when the wild dogs of Africa fasten to the trail of a quarry, they may just as well be fastened to the flanks of the quarry itself for all the chance it has of getting away. Only one faint hope offered—the river. The river Zambu Maru, however, was very far away; too far away, perhaps, and it meant making a curve to reach, which the intelligent hunting dogs would be sure to grab advantage of by taking the inner line.

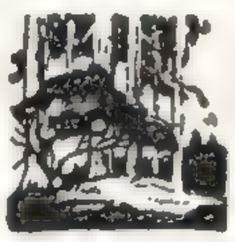
Nevertheless, the sable grabbed that last and only hope, and even as he did so, he shied suddenly, madly, with a tremendous bound and snort—like a frightened horse—at something that shot from a mimosa thicket in front and hurtled away ahead.

The beautiful bull was so startled that for a moment he did not realize whom he had put up. Then, in the slightly reduced, somewhat faded edition of himself, even to the horns, but only thirty-five inches long, there was he saw before him his—well, his affinity. In fact 'twas a lady of the sable clan, whose "clean heels" in two senses were—also in two senses—"leading him on."

But I don't pretend that the bull knew what he was doing when he drove her before him toward the river in that oasis. I only know he lowered his horns—it was a signal, and enough—if she seemed to swerve. Truly he was famed for many things—speed, pluck, dash and grace personified—but good temper was not one of them.

Therefore, you behold the two plunging madly on. The bull sable's breath wrenched out in choking sobs now. His head flung back, black wet nostrils high, agony of distress in the bulging eyes. His tongue was flopping out on one side.

And presently behind him he heard a swift patter, an unmistakable dog-like panting, drawing nearer and nearer. He knew it meant that one of his foes was endeavoring to spurt up alongside in order to take a chop—a mere handful—out of his flank, and fall back again. This gentle process would be repeated by one or other of the devils behind, till he had either no flanks left, or chose to come to bay—and die. He himself, though the effort seemed like to faint his heart, made a spurt too; and the devil behind fell back without its chop. But no matter; others took its place. The process was repeated. It was ghastly; coming nearer to success each time.



THEN it was that the bull sable, stumbling a little now, caught sight above the bushes ahead of the twisting double avenue of feathery palms that represented his first view of the river. It looked, however, to represent his last view of life; and I think it must have done, if, ever ahead dragging him on magically as by invisible ropes, the could not have seen—and I think it was about all he could see by then—the inimitable satin hind quarters; the neat, clean cut hoofs of the doe sable, literally flying ahead. And that saved him. I feel sure of it. That hind view of her alone gave him just that extra something that forced his aching legs on long after he lost knowledge really of what he was doing, or whither he was going.

It was an awful time, an appalling few minutes of living hell; but the end of it was crazy crash down through the bushes that lined the riverbank; a terrific double splash, and seethe and commotion of waters as the two big beasts leaped headlong in, and an odd, eery, whining chatter from the leading hunting dog, dancing up and down on the edge of the water, so close behind that the splash of the plunge half blinded him as it smothered his "working" face.

But that was not all.

Now few African beasts take to a river solely from choice. Possibly the sables knew that; knew that they had simply jumped out of the frying pan into a very hot fire. The three sinister, mysterious plops that had followed their own twin plunge proved it. Those noises were basking crocodiles launching in haste.

Realizing all these facts with the swiftness of instinct, the fear burned in by a thousand generations of fear, the doe

sable did not head straight across the river but turned aside, and swam to a small, straggly island some thirty yards from the bank.

The bull made no complaint, but after continuing on his own course—which was straight across that death laden stream—for another few yards, he too turned and followed the satin coated lady to the island. Landing quickly—one does not dally in *those* waters—he promptly rammed his ebon hindquarters into the most vilely spiked bush he could find and, with scimitar polished horns facing outward—awaited Fate's next move.

It was not long in coming.

The three first hunting dogs "up" had taken to the water at once and swam a little way after the sables. Then their hearts failed them, or perhaps they smelled the musky perfume crocodiles have, and they turned back.

Arrived now, limping, that gibbering fiend who had first essayed to hunt bull sables—out of sheer greed, you may be sure—on his own account. Pretty at no time, he was demoniacal now, with blood soaking his piebald faded coat in crimson smudges. Apparently, however, he carried some weight in the cutthroat canine councils; was, probably, leader of the criminal crew. Anyhow, his rage at the loss of the prey seemed several times the greatest, so that after, by growls, cursing, and by snaps impressing everybody within careless reach, he himself took the water—and he did not turn back.

Seeing this, the three biggest and strongest male hunting dogs waded out as far as they could, and struck out for the island.

The current was swift, and the exertion of swimming great, so that the wounded leader could not, therefore, go so fast as he might have done, and the three stalwarts passed him and went on. They landed. They attacked the bull sable—in and out like winking electric currents—as much to the rear as the thorns permitted. Perhaps they did not know their sable; never realized the mettle of which he was made. I can not tell. I only know that he was out of the bush in a flash. There was a sound as of swords—no, scimitars whirling through the stagnant, stifling silence, three times very quickly, and there were three distinct soft thuds.

One of the hunting dogs landed upon his own back, one upon his side, one in the shallows. They were all dead, or dying so obviously as made no odds: slain, blasted out of life in a second, each by a single stroke of the bull sable's superb long, curved, pointed horns.

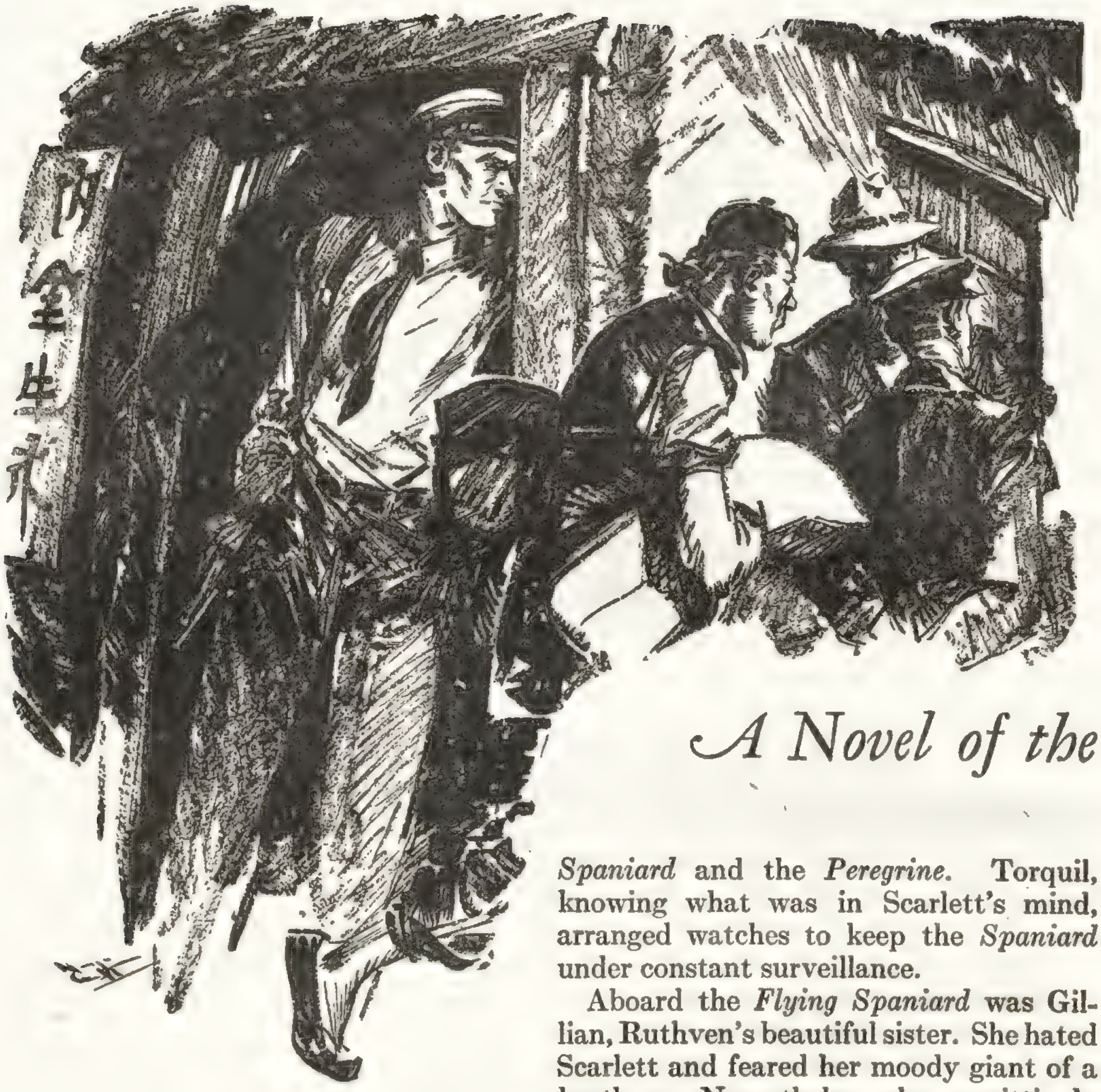
And in the pause that followed all up and down the river, all heard distinctly a sudden, startled, despairing howl that rose—and choked in a gurgle. It was the leader of the hunting dogs going under. But he ought to have known that he carried the taint of the blood smell, and that in an African river spells death. The croc had got him. He never came up; never appeared on this earth again.

Then the hunting dogs went away. They had never crossed the river in their lives. No power on earth was going to make them cross it now, after what they had seen.

But the two sables crossed it and at once, which, though they may not have known it, was the best thing they could have done, the crocodiles being too busy rushing to the taint of blood round the two carcasses already available for "burial," to trouble about the chance of creating a third one.

From the top of the bank, a magnificent silhouette against the burning sky, the bull sable looked back proudly and defiantly at the last hunting dog, also in silhouette, but certainly not superb, just vanishing over the top of the opposite bank.

Beast regarded beast, and turned away. The act represented the birth of a new era. The last survivors from the ravages of the hunting dogs, the sables entered a new kingdom together, side by side; a country that had never known sable. And that, my friends, is why you shall now find sable antelopes on the left bank of the Zambu Maru River, but not on the right one. So remember.



A Novel of the

THE FEUD between Scarlett and Ruthven, of the *Flying Spaniard*, and the crew of the *Peregrine*—Torquil and Callaghan, Manisty and Blaise—was brought to a head when Scarlett and his partner murdered old man Moreau and robbed him, and framed Manisty for the crime. What it was that old Moreau's safety box had been plundered of, no one in the islands knew; but it was generally believed to be something of fabulous value.

After the date had been set for Manisty's execution, Scarlett and Ruthven had but one thought in mind, and that was to put sea leagues between the *Flying Spaniard* and the *Peregrine*. Torquil, knowing what was in Scarlett's mind, arranged watches to keep the *Spaniard* under constant surveillance.

Aboard the *Flying Spaniard* was Gillian, Ruthven's beautiful sister. She hated Scarlett and feared her moody giant of a brother. Nevertheless she unwittingly furthered their game by striking up a friendship with the youthful Blaise, of the *Peregrine*. Scarlett, learning of an engagement she had with the boy, held her aboard the *Spaniard*. And while Blaise left his watch station to meet the girl on a lonely point of land out of sight of the anchorage, the *Flying Spaniard* slipped away to sea.

Torquil and Callaghan doubted Blaise's excuse that he had been asleep. And then he broke down and confessed that it was Gillian. Their hate for the *Flying Spaniard* flared, drove them, when the *Peregrine* spoke a ship that had seen the *Spaniard* bearing away southwest in the direction of the Island of Tungas, to gamble their way through the reefs of the

Conclusion of

TRAITOR'S BANE

By BASIL CAREY

South Seas

Hombergs—through which only two ships had ever successfully passed—to save time.

Meanwhile, aboard the *Spaniard*, Gillian had learned the truth about the crime. She surprised her brother and Scarlett gloating over old Moreau's treasure—an emerald snake fashioned of forty-five priceless stones—and in the sick moment of realization that she was shipped with a pair of murderers, she lost all sense of caution; she denounced them, forgetful that Scarlett was a desperate man.

So Scarlett, not to be balked at this late stage, drank Ruthven under the table one evening, put in at the Island of Moselle—and when the *Spaniard* hoisted sail again Gillian stood, a lonely figure on the beach, marooned. And when the *Peregrine* came mincing up to the island to replenish her water butts, Torquil had to take one of the hated enemy aboard his ship.

On the *Spaniard*, Ruthven finally sobered. Insane with rage and fear when he discovered Gillian was missing, he charged down upon Scarlett at the wheel.

"You rat!" he roared, his face contorted. "This is your doing—where is she?"

Scarlett laughed.

"You hysterical idiot," he said without a tremor. "How should I know? And take care you don't suggest again that I know anything about her."

Ruthven's anger subsided.

"She's not aboard," he said heavily; and, suddenly flaming up again, "My God, where is she?"

THE RAYS of the lantern he carried lighted up his face grown suddenly older, more tired.

"Let's have the boys down and ask 'em what they know."

"I've done that," said Scarlett sharply. "They don't know a thing."

"Did she go ashore this morning?"

"Yes."

"And came back?"

"Of course she came back. Do you think I'd leave here there?"

"What did she do then?"

"Went below—just as we cast off."

"You're sure?"

"I'm dead sure."

"Then she's gone," said Ruthven.

He walked over to the rail, a vast shadow in the gloom. Scarlett was conscious of his eyes, burning through the dropping night. There was no speech between them—just silence, the heavy, uneasy silence of suspicion and hate.

Scarlett set his mouth and drove the *Flying Spaniard* on toward Tungas.

CHAPTER XI

DESERTION

BLAISE came up to Torquil.

"She's sprung a leak," he panted. "No wonder she's wallowing like this. Callaghan's sending the boys to the pumps."

He ran his wet hands through his hair. "It's pretty bad," he said. "That reef—"

The rattle of the pumps began. A dishevelled Callaghan raced here and there, urging, cursing. Gillian, terrified, flattened herself against the deck house as the men rushed by.

"Is it gone too far to fother?" asked Torquil.

"Going to try now," said Blaise, and rushed away to the locker where odd pieces of sailcloth were stored.

His hands were hot and he fumbled, but at last he pulled out a crumpled length. Behind him Raki was gathering up scraps saved for such a contingency—oakum, yarn, anything that would help to choke up the hole in the *Peregrine's* bottom.

"Come on," boomed Callaghan's voice. "This ain't no tea party!"

They worked like slaves to save the *Peregrine.* The loose stuff was lowered by means of the sailcloth to the leak. The current sweeping into the hole carried the scraps with it. The scrape of the pumps went on with maddening monotony.

"Fotherin' ain't no good," Callaghan burst out at last. "Torquil, let Raki take her. Better heave to, an' see what can be done."

They battled with the leak for hours. With all their strength they worked at the mischief. But the surging water defied them. The trouble had gone too far before it was discovered. Again and again they patched and bolstered and plugged, covered now with grease and oil, and wet to the skin. The exultant sea thrust its green fingers into the *Peregrine.* Time passed, but neither Torquil nor Callaghan paid the slightest heed. For them the hours were swallowed up in this grim battle with the sea. Just before two on the second day Callaghan gave a grunt and straightened his back.

"No good," he said. "Blaise, who's at the pumps now? Well, guess we're done. Another six hours maybe. Maybe not so long."

He was right. They knew it. All three of them had known it for an hour past. But it goes hard to give up the fight against the sea. Those pumps—they weren't much use. For every gallon they cleared out, a gallon and a half came in. The Kanakas bent their back to the work. They made no murmur. In shifts they labored under the heat of the sun. But they were frightened. They were cowed by disaster. Their simple minds connected it with the displeasure of the tall chief on Moselle. While they worked they spoke in low tones. Without doubt the whole ship was under a spell. There could be only one end to such a beginning as this. One of them spied a sinister fin above the water—sharks. They stood to their task, but their hearts were gone.

Towards three o'clock the wind increased. There was an oily swell on. The *Peregrine* began to wallow more heavily now, more lazily, like an old dowager among cushions. The men looked at the sea and shrugged their shoulders. The clank of the pumps went on. No one thought of Gillian. Even Blaise had forgotten her. For all of them there was nothing but the dying

ship. The galley fires went out, and with them went the Kanakas' courage.

Torquil was busy stocking the longboat. Biscuits, water, blankets, a tarpaulin—he flung them all in. Callaghan, rolling curses, helped him.

"There won't be much room for all of us in the longboat," he said suddenly to Torquil. "Us three, five boys an' the girl. Nine. That'll be a tight fit if we're afloat very long."

"Aye," said Torquil dully.

"What about the raft? Better get it up afore it's too late. It'll carry some of 'em, anyway."

BLAISE and Callaghan hauled the raft on deck. Sweating, panting, they let it lie where it fell and went to Torquil. None of them had eaten since morning. It was now mid-afternoon.

"Look out!" shouted Blaise.

He gripped Gillian's arm and held her for dear life. The *Peregrine* was listing heavily to port. Down the slanting decks a boy rolled, plunging headlong over the side. He came up once before the hovering sharks got him.

There was no time to be lost. Pumping stopped. Every one stood by to launch the longboat. It was a tricky business in that heavy swell. A rope fouled. They worked at it impatiently, aware that there was not a moment to spare. The boys who were left began to whimper. Those sharks!

"Him tiark all same makem *kai-kai*," Raki was moaning. "O Torikil—"

"Shut your blasted mouth!" said Torquil. "Ease her, Blaise. Ease her, fool! Now—now!"

"Hurry," urged Callaghan. "Hurry..."

The slant of the deck became more apparent. The lazy combers washed over the side now, sure of their prey. How would it end, thought Gillian, standing mute and terrified. Her anxious eyes rested on the longboat, afloat at last, tossing crazily on the water. Would it hold all of them?

Her attention was drawn away by a sudden uproar. Raki had brought on deck a cooking pot—a heavy copper thing that appealed to his primitive mind in some extraordinary way. He was trying to throw it into the longboat. Blaise had spotted him. He flung himself at the uplifted arms. There was a crash and the two of them closed. Torquil turned to see blood on Blaise's shirt.

Torquil went for him, raging. The Kanaka tore himself free and leaped for the longboat. His panic infected the other boys. Insane with fear, they piled into the boat. The knife that had stabbed Blaise slashed through the ropes that held fast to the *Peregrine*. The thing was done in an instant.

Torquil's gun spat and Raki crumpled up in the stern sheets. But already two pairs of oars were at work, rowing frantically away from the doomed ship. The waves took the longboat, tossing it from one to another like a cork, flinging it south—farther and farther away from the reach of gun or voice.

Blaise staggered to his feet as Torquil's arms jerked him upright. His shirt was red and sodden.

"Hell!" roared Callaghan. "The raft, Torquil. Quick!"

They lugged the raft to the side. It was strong and in good condition. Torquil caught up a coil of rope which he slung over his shoulder. He knew the danger of wet, slippery wood. Somehow he and Callaghan fought their way to the galley and flung some ship's biscuits into a canvas bag. But they could get no water. The three small kegs were in the longboat. To shift the big water casks was out of the question, now.

"Come on," panted Torquil. "Can't wait!"

They went back on deck to find Gillian holding Blaise. He looked at them with dull eyes.

"She'll go any minute," he said in a languid voice. "If you can shove me on, all right. If you can't—"

But already they had the raft over the side. It dipped, then righted itself, and Callaghan dropped quickly, steadying it.

Torquil lifted Blaise, and Blaise smiled gamely and set his teeth as he was lowered to the raft. Once there, he rolled over on his face—and fainted for the first time in his life.

The *Peregrine* was shuddering. Callaghan saw the ominous settling motion and yelled:

"Jump! She's going!"

"Catch hold of Blaise!" Torquil shouted. "You'll lose him."

He turned to Gillian.

"When I say jump, you're to jump," he told her. "I'll get you all right."

He swung over the side and dropped into the sea beside the raft. Callaghan stretched out a hand, and somehow he got on the planks. Between them they maneuvered the raft closer in to the ship. Torquil pushed the wet hair out of his eyes and peered up. Gillian was waiting, her face dead white. He balanced himself to receive the impact of her body, throwing his weight forward as he lifted his wet arms.

"Jump!"

II

RUTHVEN was moody. He had recovered somewhat from his clash with Scarlett, and stalked about the deck with a set face. The boys jumped at his least command. Pau Tiau spilled some coffee and got a beating that kept him on his face all day. Scarlett said nothing. But his brain was working furiously. How much did Ruthven guess? He watched the boys like a cat. Had any of them dared to speak?

All morning they went westward, hurrying toward Tungas. Just before noon Scarlett went below, to find Ruthven sitting on the table, his swinging legs crossed, his arms folded. His eyes were flickering oddly.

"Scarlett!"

"Well?"

"About Gillian—"

Scarlett's eyes narrowed.

"I warned you, Ruthven," he said. "Watch what you say to me."

"I know, I know," Ruthven said hastily. "But it's damn funny that nobody saw her fall. An accident like that doesn't happen without some one seeing it. I've sent for Natui. If he knows anything he's going to spit it out."

"Why should he keep it dark if he saw her fall?"

"That's what he's going to tell me," said Ruthven.

Scarlett smiled. It would be amusing to watch Ruthven play the heavy interrogator. He leaned back against the wall, hands thrust in pockets, his heel kicking monotonously at a locker.

Natui came dragging into the cabin. He stood first on one foot, then the other. It was obvious that he was frightened.

"Come here," Ruthven thundered at him. "Natui, you savvy him Gillian all same lost?"

Natui swallowed.

"Savvy, Rutian."

"Him Gillian drown in dipitee—deep sea," pursued Ruthven. "Suppose you lookout boy all time Gillian drown in dipitee, how you not see Gillian? Hey?"

The boy wet his lips. His eyes sought Scarlett.

"Look at me," commanded Ruthven irritably. "You not see Gillian?"

"No, Rutian"

"You all same damn liar. You see Gillian. You likem Gillian drown. Hey?"

"No, no!"

"You fetchem one fella whip," said Ruthven malevolently, pointing to a lash that hung on a nail. "You see Gillian drown, you all same damn bad. Suppose me beat, suppose you all same die."

The threat was effective. Natui gave a howl of despair and flung himself at Scarlett's feet. He protested amid sobs that he had seen nothing of Gillian, that he knew nothing. He implored Scarlett to save him. But Scarlett said not a word.

"Why does he keep yowling to you?" Ruthven demanded, lifting a flushed face. "Scarlett, do you hear? There's something queer at the back of this. None of the boys will give me a straight answer.

I've questioned the lot—Natui's the last. They won't tell me a thing. But they know something. And you do, too. All of you know something that I don't."

His eyes went from Scarlett to the trembling Kanaka.

"Did she kill herself?" he asked unsteadily. "Is that what you're hiding?"

There was no answer. Ruthven strode across the narrow floor and gripped Scarlett's shoulders.

"You little rat! What is it? Tell me. Tell me, or I'll kill you right here."

Scarlett never moved. His dark eyes stared mockingly into the angry blue ones. His voice was cold as steel.

"You're a fool, Ruthven," he said. "And you don't have hysterics well. If you want to start something with me, I'll take you."

Ruthven flung away from him and kicked Natui upright again. Why didn't he wring Scarlett's neck, he asked himself bitterly. What was it about the fellow that made him draw back?

"Ruthven."

He turned sharply.

"Well?"

"We ought to be at Tungas the day after tomorrow."

"I know that."

"If you're going to continue this insanity—"

"Do you call me insane just because—"

"Yes, I do. You're accusing me of knowing something about Gillian. I tell you I haven't set eyes on her since we left Moselle. You can believe it or not. It happens to be the truth. If you're so sure that I'm a liar we'll chuck partnership when we've finished the deal on Tungas."

"We'll chuck it anyway."

"You chucked it once before, and came back. Do you remember? Came crawling back like a sick pup at sundown."

"You say that!"

"It's true," said Scarlett. His tone changed. "Come on, there's no use raising hell."

THEY looked at each other. Ruthven shrugged his shoulders with a curious gesture of helplessness and went on deck. One day he'd take all the courage he had in both his hands and finish with Scarlett. What kept him back? The fellow's eyes—his cold insolence? Ruthven looked down at his hands and saw that they were trembling.

"Rutian," said a voice.

He looked round. Inside the deck house crouched a brown body. It was Natui. The boy was plainly terrified lest any one else should hear him.

"Sekeleti all same in cabin?" he whispered.

Ruthven glanced round. There was no sign of Scarlett. He nodded. Natui beckoned cautiously. Lounging across the deck, Ruthven stooped as if to rub his foot.

"Well?"

"Rutian, him Gillian on Moselle."

"Moselle?"

"Him Gillian go in longboat, keep on Moselle. Not come back all same Kanaka, all same Sekeleti."

"You tell true? All same missionary-true?"

"All same mitinari-true, Rutian. Rutian no savvy 'bout Gillian, Rutian all same drunk long time."

The anxious whispering ceased. Ruthven straightened himself, puzzled. Gillian on Moselle? What on earth was she doing there? He paced up and down, utterly at sea. Scarlett, coming on deck, noted his preoccupation.

"Look here," said Ruthven, suddenly. "I've an idea that Gillian may be on Moselle."

"On Moselle?"

"Yes. We'll put back."

The glitter in Scarlett's eyes almost betrayed him.

"Put back! Are you crazy?"

"No."

"But why should she be on Moselle?"

"It's just an idea I've got."

"Ruthven, you're cracked. We'd be against the wind."

"I don't give a damn."

"Well, I do," said Scarlett sharply. "We're the best part of our way to Tungas and you get this damn fool idea about putting back. Why on earth should Gillian be there? Has one of the boys been pitching you some yarn?"

"We're going to put back."

"We damn well are not."

They faced each other. Presently Ruthven said slowly:

"Why don't you want to put back? Isn't Gillian's life worth more than those damned emeralds? You needn't look at me like that. She's there. One of the boys told me—and you knew it."

Scarlett perceived that he had lost that particular game. He shrugged his shoulders and would have turned away, but Ruthven swung him round roughly.

"Why is she there?"

"She had a yen to explore," said Scarlett blandly. "I knew all the time. She'll be all right till we pick her up again. If we took Gillian to Tungas with us, this would be our last voyage. Get that into your thick skull. Do you think she wouldn't be as good as her word? You know she'd give us up."

Ruthven turned an ugly red.

"She'll stand by me."

Scarlett laughed.

"And do you think I'd take it lying down? Haven't you the brains to know that if I swing, I won't swing alone?"

His black eyes narrowed to two slits in his sallow face. His lean, graceful body was taut with passion.

"Do you think you or Gillian or anybody else is going to stretch my neck? You hulking fool, you're just a pawn in my game. That's all you've ever been. I've kept you with me because you've got brawn. A lump of muscle, that's all you are—"

His slow, deadly voice went on and on, until he had Ruthven quivering like a man under the lash. The terrified Natui, with his bare shoulders pressed hard against the deck house, watched them as one watches a sudden encounter between two bulls. Suddenly he screamed a warning. Even as the sound tore from his lips Ruthven hurled himself across the deck. The great hands had Scarlett by the throat. All the covert, furtive hatred of the years was alive in Ruthven now, lashing him on to kill this man who had laughed at him, bullied him, dominated him for so long. Let Scarlett see who was master now! Yes, let him see . . .

CHAPTER XII

THE RAFT

THE *PEREGRINE* heeled and sank in twenty fathoms. The raft rocked on the edge of the swirl that sucked down after her. For a time it took all Torquil's efforts to steady the frail platform that slid here and there over the smooth shoulders of the waves. Blaise lay like a log, and Gillian and Callaghan hung on to him in grim determination, lest he should roll overboard. All of them were wet to the skin. Their clothes clung tightly to their bodies, plastered afresh as wave after wave broke against the boards and sent up clouds of spray. The sun was westering. In another hour it would be dark.

The wind lessened, but the oily swell of the waters did not abate. It took Gillian all her time to keep on the raft at all. The eternal motion, the incredible slickness of wet wood, made it exhausting work to maintain a hold. For the first half hour she felt violently sick. It passed as she accustomed her body to the uneasy movement. Blaise never stirred. He was conscious, as they knew by his muffled grunts. Torquil and Callaghan exchanged anxious glances.

"He's bad," said Torquil presently. "Miss Ruthven—Gillian, will you—can you lift his head a bit? That's it."

They talked little. There seemed nothing to say. All their efforts were concentrated on keeping their lives out of the greedy clutch of the sea. The sun went down, swimming out of sight through a gray haze that came out of the

water to meet it. In the darkening sky the dim stars showed. On the tossing raft the four could see one another as vague shadows.

With sunset came a swift relief from the heat of the day. But it was a relief that lasted less than an hour. The tropic night fell on them with the coolness that comes at sea level. It flayed their sodden, fatigued bodies like a knife. Torquil swung his arms to and fro, stirring the stagnant blood to life again.

They heard Blaise speaking, laboriously, heavily, like a man trying to lift something too big for him.

"Damned boy," he was saying. "Kill him one day . . . Torquil, I've got a flask—somewhere."

Fumbling in his pockets they pulled out the leather covered flask. From the canvas bag Torquil fished out a crumbling handful of biscuit. In the dim starlight he poured out a little whisky into the palm of his cupped hand and soaked the biscuit in the precious drops. Callaghan and Gillian propped Blaise up between them. He swallowed the biscuit and it seemed to revive him. But the movement jerked at his wound. Callaghan felt the hot blood welling under his hand.

"We'll have to make a fresh bandage," he said. "Lie back again, sonny."

"Tear my shirt up," murmured Blaise faintly.

"Doesn't Gillian wear petticoats?" said Torquil.

Gillian went scarlet at his tone.

"Keep him still," she said to Callaghan. "No—I can tear it myself."

"Here you are," said Torquil, handing the torn strips to Callaghan. "Make it into a pad and hold it tight. It may stop the bleeding."

The swell died as the night wore away. presently Blaise began to talk—jerkily, deliriously. He scolded imaginary boys, shouted for drinks, played over and over again a disputed game of poker. He talked of Torquil, of Callaghan, of Manisty.

Presently the note altered. A fretful clamor for water came from the dry lips. The word sent a tremor through his hearers. How long could they all last out on that half flask of whisky, those crumbling biscuits?

Worn out at last, Blaise fell into a fitful doze. The raft slid over the water where the starlit sky lay reflected. Callaghan shifted cautiously, easing the strain of Blaise's body against his own.

"He's asleep," he said in a whisper. "Is the girl all right?"

Torquil turned to the silent figure beside him.

"All right, Gillian?"

There was no answer.

"Gillian," he said again. He leaned closer so that he felt the slim shoulders heaving with the sobs which she strove in vain to repress.

"Oh, hell," he whispered, dismayed. "Don't give way like this."

She shook him off and buried her face in her arms.

"Gillian," he begged with a note of subdued urgency. "What is it? Are you cold again? Are you—scared?"

By her sudden stillness he knew he had hit the mark. In his heart there stirred the swift, inexplicable pity that men feel for a weak thing terrified beyond endurance. He forgot her insolence, the proud way in which she had carried herself aboard the lost *Peregrine*.

"Try to sleep. It'll pass the time."

"No."

"But you must. Lean against me for a bit."

She was shivering as he drew her to him.

"Let me hold you, Gillian. No, you'll have to come right in my arms."

"No," said Gillian, so firmly that Blaise stirred in his sleep. Torquil's great arms reached out in the darkness and lifted her into shelter.

She stiffened for a struggle; then her body sagged. She had no more fight left. A terrible weariness overtook her, an utter collapse of mind and body under the urgency of exhaustion. Torquil spoke to her, but she did not hear him. All through the night he sat there, his arms

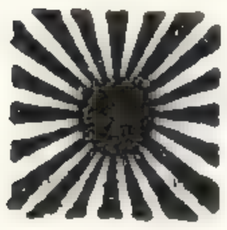
cramped and stiff. Blaise lay like a log, sunk in a stupor of sleep in Callaghan's arms.

How would it end, Torquil wondered. They were still drifting westward. Was it possible that they might be blown across the track of some ship heading for Tungas? It was an unfrequented part of the Pacific. Most of the trade that came to the island came from the west and north.

In the hour before dawn he went down into the depths. It didn't matter about himself. But to watch Blaise suffer; to see Callaghan licking his cracked lips with his dry tongue; to know that Gillian—that girl . . .

After an interminable night, the stars paled. A faint light showed in the east. Overhead layer after layer of darkness was rolled up and put away. Torquil waited for the sun as a man might wait for a reprieve from death. In the gray light he glanced at Gillian. He felt a queer thrill of satisfaction as he looked at her, whom he had held through the night.

A sound made him look up sharply. Across the red-gold of Gillian's head he and Blaise stared at each other with a strange hostility.



THE SUN climbed up the rungs of the sky and sent a glow of friendly warmth to the cold racked bodies on the raft. By eight o'clock their chilled blood was running more quickly, their cramped muscles easier. Cautiously they moved about, stretching themselves. Torquil opened the canvas bag and shared out biscuit. They moistened their mouths with whisky that seemed like liquid fire.

Gillian's terror had passed. From her pocket she drew a little comb and made as elaborate a toilette as possible with the help of a square inch of mirror. Gravely she insisted that the men do the same. For the first time in thirty-six hours Callaghan laughed.

"Blaise," said Torquil, "shall I lift you a bit? Sit up, man. That easier?"

Blaise grunted. He looked very white and seemed to have no strength in his body.

"Going to be hot," he announced.

He was right. In an hour's time the raft was like a grill. The sun poured down on them, devouring them. The lazy wind brought small relief. Before their tired eyes the sea glittered so that they must turn this way and that for relief—and find none. The men pulled up their tattered shirts to protect their heads.

Blaise was rocked uneasily, turning from side to side regardless of the pain that every movement caused him. He talked incessantly, and the others forbore to check him, though his voice had become a broken whisper, and his demands for water made Torquil clench his hands. As noon came on he lay quiet at last, sunk like the rest in a torpor. Anything seemed preferable to the appalling heat. Even the chill of the night took on a pleasant aspect. They were tormented by the sun and the brazen sky, and the everlasting blue of the sea.

The sun would go down, the sea and the sky would melt into darkness—but the greatest terror of all would remain. The torture of thirst. The salt air set their throats to shouting for water. Their lips cracked, and tongues became wooden clogs. Speech became difficult.

After noon Torquil measured out half a biscuit apiece. He looked at the whisky and glanced at Callaghan. Callaghan nodded. Torquil doled out Blaise's ration and turned to Gillian.

"What about you?" asked Gillian.

"Callaghan and I will have ours presently."

"Is there—how much is there now?"

He showed her.

"Yes, it's not much," he said in answer to her cry of dismay. "If we don't get picked up by tomorrow night . . ."

The day wore away. Gradually the heat lessened. But with evening the wind rose. The surface of the raft was washed again and again by the waves. How long could their exhausted bodies cope with the force of two elements? Already

Torquil felt himself shivering violently with the change from hot to cold that swept across the sea at sundown.

The brief twilight ended. Across the sky scudded flying clouds that hid the stars. It seemed doubtful whether the raft would live till morning. Torquil thanked the gods for that coil of rope that he had slung over his shoulder on quitting the *Peregrine*. He passed it round Gillian's body and his own.

THEY crouched as a wave smashed against them. The dark swirling tide swept past, leaving them drenched, choking. They spat out the salt water and braced their bodies for the next assault. Numbed, half blinded, they pitted against the enemy all the strength that remained in them. A fierce anger awoke in Torquil. Gillian, held fast by the rope that bound them, heard him shouting in the darkness. The sound of his curses banished the sick despair that had her by the throat. Life! Over her there swept a sudden determination to ride out this storm. A swift fierce flood seemed to shoot through her veins.

The extraordinary, reckless courage that possessed her kept her sane. Again and again the waves swept over her, leaving her blind, choking, sick. The rope that bound her to Torquil began to cut through her sodden clothes. The constant rub and strain became a torture. She set her teeth and said no word, but he felt her fumbling to ease the rope and guessed at the cause. He pulled her close to him.

"Keep close," he ordered. "I'll hold you."

His arm went round her like a steel hawser. The cruel thresh of the waves went on, but his hold never loosened. All through the night they battled with the sea.

After an eternity the sky paled. With a laggard dawn the wind dropped. By sunup the sea grew calmer, to settle presently into an oily swell. The voyagers lay flat on the raft while the warmth of the sun penetrated to their cold racked bodies. They were wet to the bone and their clothes were in ribbons.

To Blaise the day brought nothing save the sight of Gillian's face.

Tenacity of purpose, the determination to see her again, had kept him alive through the night. Callaghan had fought the sea for him, holding him safely through the tear and stress of the water. The boy had set his lips and endured. But the constant movement had jerked savagely at his wound. As the hours passed the pain in his side increased. The beating of his heart began to hurt him. It turned to a slow hammer that seemed to require immense effort before it would move. A fear possessed him—a terrible fear that he would never see Gillian again. He tried to call to her, but no sound came.

He couldn't swallow the soaked biscuit with which they tried to feed him in the morning. With weak impatience he pushed it aside. Wasting time like that! As if he could eat the damned stuff! He became aware that Torquil was holding him—holding him tightly as though afraid of losing him. With enormous care he turned his head and stared at Gillian. A deep content stole over him. She sat so still, her body outlined sharply against the eternal blue. The sun was on her hair, turning it to the red-gold color he had loved. Her slim hands lay folded in her lap. He tried to stretch out his own, but they would not move.

He leaned back against Torquil. Suddenly he was very weary. The hammer that was his heart rose—fell—rose . . . Still he looked straight into Gillian's eyes—looked so long that he scarcely knew when they changed into the eyes of God.

CHAPTER XIII

THREE ARE SAVED

THE *HENRY JAMES*, rolling down from Wakatea to Tungas, sighted a raft on the port bow. Her skipper, Sam Harvey, at once put about and ordered the longboat to be lowered. Sam

himself took the glass and tried to decide whether any of the four people aboard the raft remained alive. The mate, George Peters, standing by, opined that if they were alive they'd be making signals.

"Exhausted, most likely," said Harvey. "Remember the seas we've had. Take a look, George. Looks like one of 'em's a woman."

Peters took the glass.

"That's right," he said almost at once. "A girl— Hey, she's movin'! Strike me, she's seen us. Tryin' to wave. Pokin' the men up . . ."

With difficulty the men of the *Henry James* hauled the living and the dead from the raft, into the longboat. Callaghan crumpled up in the stern sheets; Gillian lay back with closed eyes in the care of Peters; but Torquil sat upright, rocking drunkenly with every swing of the oars. His cramped arms refused to loosen their hold on Blaise.

Harvey was waiting for them. Already he had the boys on the run, heating water and getting out blankets. He himself forced open the arms which held the dead boy. They laid Blaise gently on deck and covered his face with a coat while the others were carried down the companion. The longboat was hoisted and made fast. Slowly the *Henry James* swung round.

It was early morning and the sun was not yet at its full strength. Harvey went to the sail locker and found a needle and a length of cloth. He could hear the boys bustling about with rum and blankets. The smell of coffee drifted about the ship. He went back to Blaise and sat down beside him. His gnarled hands were soon busy at his task.

Peters came on deck.

"Goin' to bury him right away?" he asked.

"Yes—it's better so. Especially when there's a woman about."

"Down below they're doin' fine," Peters said. "The girl's sleepin'. But the old one is askin' for more rum, and the big chap—"

"What's he doin'?"

"'Tis quiet as death he is," finished Peters. "Will you want weights?"

He strolled away to get them. Harvey lifted Blaise on to the spread sailcloth. The greedy sea would have him, a peace offering for the safety of three lives. When Peters came back with the weights Harvey said no word. Together they made the dead boy secure against the nameless hunters who haunt the sea floor. When at last all was ready, Harvey mopped his forehead.

"Put up a bit of a prayer," he commanded, and listened attentively while Peters invoked the care of God and his saints for the soul of the unknown dead . . .

DOWN below Callaghan was causing confusion by calling for further drafts of rum. He was light headed and kept up a rumbling protest about a misdeal. To pacify him Peters produced a battered pack and implored him to shuffle the cards himself. Still calling at intervals for the rum which was denied him, Callaghan proceeded to deal four hands of poker with enormous solemnity. He then declared that, having seen justice done, he would not stay to see the game played out. He clambered from his bunk, swayed dizzily, fell in again—and plunged straight into a sound sleep.

But Torquil could not sleep. He had submitted to the ministrations of Duck Rafferty, the second mate. He had suffered himself to be fed, rubbed, rolled in a blanket and lifted into Rafferty's bunk. He had seemed like a man frozen, lost to all sense of what was passing. But with the relaxation of his body things swung into focus again. For the sake of those others on the raft he had kept an iron curb on his emotions. When Blaise died in his arms, he had let no sign of feeling betray him. When he swore at Callaghan for a sentimental fool and spoke roughly to stop Gillian's tears, his voice never faltered.

Twenty-four hours after Blaise died they were picked up. By that time

Callaghan was silent. Gillian's strength was failing. The night had exhausted all of them. The last crumbs of biscuit stuck in their parched throats. At the bottom of the flask were a few drops of whisky. None of them would drink it, until at last Torquil made Gillian swallow it. She had been shivering for a long time, and her face was flushed and feverish. She had slept a little in the night, turning toward him, creeping closer in blind search of warmth. The hostility that had flared between them was gone. Callaghan, huddled beside them on the rocking boards, remembered that they had been enemies, and put his swollen tongue in his cheek.

The strain was over. But as Torquil's body could not at once accustom itself to change but must still lie cramped and awkward in Rafferty's bunk, so his mind refused for a time to accept the things that had happened. For a long time he lay like a man dazed, his aching eyes fixed on the brown blanket that covered him. Still he could feel the sickening rock of the waves beneath the raft. Still he could feel the burning aftertaste that neat whisky leaves on a smarting palate.

Rafferty, standing by, became alarmed at the fixed look in those sleepless, red rimmed eyes.

"Want anything?" he ventured at last.

There was no answer and he drew nearer to the silent figure. He had known men who left their sanity behind when they were picked up. Rafferty stirred uneasily.

"Must rouse him somehow," he muttered. Then, aloud, "Don't you feel like sleepin'?"

No answer.

"You mustn't take it like this," Rafferty said. "You're all right now. What might your name be, eh? Don't you hear me?"

He paused, wiping his forehead.

"You'll have had a tough time," he said. "Maybe you've been afloat a good while?"

Torquil stared right through him with sunken eyes that had a queer, dead look in them. Rafferty swallowed hard.

"That young man," he said desperately. "That young man who is dead. What was his name?"

Torquil's set lips quivered. Into those terrible, staring eyes came a frightened look. A thick, choked voice answered Rafferty's question—

"Blaise."

At that word the rigid body relaxed. The unnatural, stony calm wavered, then broke. Torquil turned on his face, burying his head in his arms. For a moment Rafferty stood and watched the heaving shoulders.

Then he went out, shutting the door behind him with a triumphant slam.

II

THE *FLYING SPANIARD* was laboring toward Moselle. Ruthven stood at the wheel and urged the ship forward. She swayed and heeled like a tipsy jade, and each time he brought her up again with an impatient hand.

Ruthven's body ached—but Scarlett lay senseless in his bunk. Ruthven began to sing hoarsely.

It was curious how suddenly Scarlett had gone down at the end. At first he had fought like a devil; then, abruptly, he had dropped. Ruthven had cursed him, taunted him, but he had been unable to rise. He had been carried below by two of the boys, and Ruthven swung the *Flying Spaniard* round with her head toward Moselle—for Gillian.

The afternoon drew on to the rich hour before sunset. Ruthven lifted his head, suddenly conscious of the vivid blue of the sky and sea—the strange, intense blue that is never seen in the North. It twisted his heart with its beauty. The sun sent long shadows over the deck. The shadow of the mainmast fell black and cold along the planks. For no reason at all Ruthven shivered. He thought of Scarlett . . .

The sun went down and the brief

twilight began. Every rope and stanchion stood out with a grinning intensity. Already the stars were rushing to their places. A coldness came into the wind—a chill that increased until Ruthven shivered again. Soon the port and starboard lights began to wink on the rolling water. Ruthven stretched his cramped fingers and shouted in the darkness for Pau Tiau to take over the helm.

No one came in answer to his call. He shouted again.

There was no sound of voices. Nothing but the rumble and creak of rope and canvas, and straining wood. Angrily he decided to lash the helm and drag out Pau Tiau by the heels. His great hands worked at the rope, making the wheel fast, then he strode forward.

Just by the deck house he stopped. He heard the soft pad of bare feet behind him. Swinging round on his heel, he peered into the darkness. He could see no one.

"Hey, you boy!"

No answer. He felt the skin at the back of his neck begin to prickle.

"You—Pau Tiau!"

Out of the night came the whir of a rope. It fell about him as he stood there, encircling him, tightening until his arms were bound to his sides. Taken by surprise, he tried to hit out, but he could not lift his arms above the elbow. Furious, he plunged wildly toward the side of the ship. At the fourth step he fell heavily, jerked to his knees by the pull of the rope.

"What the hell's up?" he demanded. "Wait till I get out of this—"

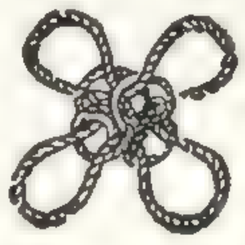
"It'll be a long time before you do that."

"Scarlett!"

The blood in his veins turned to water at the sound of that lazy, mocking voice. In a fury of despair he writhed in his bonds, struggling to free himself. It was useless. Every movement tightened the hempen coils.

"I've got you," said Scarlett. "Thought you'd knocked me out—stupid fool!"

Ruthven caught his breath. Then he screamed—screamed for help, for the boys. A hand came out of the dark and slipped over his throat. He bucked away from those sliding, sinewy fingers—then the sounds of his frenzy stopped. Into his mouth a gag was thrust. He could distinguish the sour, thick taste of torn sacking. He tried to swallow—choked—heaved his shoulders in a last effort to break the bonds above his elbows. About his ankles he felt the bite of a rope. Turn and writhe as he would, Scarlett had him fast. Why was the fellow trussing him like a fowl? There was a rope binding his knees now. His hands were forced together—behind him—tied with palms outward. The agony of the bruised veins of his wrists brought tears that burned his eyes.



HE WAS left lying still. Where was Scarlett? Moving his head painfully, Ruthven tried to pierce the darkness. The wind blew freshly, and he smelled death in it. This was the end. He knew it. He could hear the slapping of a rope. Dimly he perceived that Scarlett was busy with the mast. Something hurtled against the dim stars. A rope—why should Scarlett be throwing a rope over the crosstree?

Yet that was what he was doing. With the coil over his arm Scarlett steadied himself, and flung the rope's end over the crosstree. The loose end thudded down on the deck, and now his hot hands were busy with that prone, helpless figure. In spite of Ruthven's furious rollings and turnings he held him fast.

"What's he doing?" screamed Ruthven's terrified brain. "What in God's name's he doing?"

He soon knew. Under his armpits a rope was thrust, and knotted at the back. He felt himself dragged across the deck to the foot of the mast. Scarlett's breath was coming thickly as he hauled the heavy body of his enemy upright against the mast.

He caught the loose end of rope and bent with all his might. Up—up—up went the burden at the other end, swaying, bumping against the mast. Up and

up, till Ruthven's head swung five feet below the crosstree. Panting, heaving, Scarlett put out the last ounce of his strength to make his end of the rope fast. When the knot was secure he sank down, exhausted, blown, his breath coming in huge, painful gasps.

Presently he shook the sweat out of his eyes and sat back on his heels, staring upward. Between him and the stars swayed Ruthven's body—a helpless, grotesque mass. The ship heeled to port under the wind, swaying perilously, and Ruthven swung with it. Scarlett got on his feet and pulled unsteadily on the becketed wheel. Even as his hands were busy with it, there came a dull thud. The blood sang in his ears, but he did not look up. The night wind whistled in the shrouds. From the boys' quarters came a sound of singing. Scarlett had served out grog to the Kanakas—and locked them in. It wasn't likely they'd have interfered, but he was playing safe. They couldn't talk about what they hadn't seen—and by morning there wouldn't be anything to see.

Thud—thud—*crash!*

The sweat stood on Scarlett's forehead. How long before Ruthven would die? Would it be a quick end, or would he hold on to life until every bone in his body was smashed to pulp?

Scarlett's tongue flicked over his dry lips. In spite of himself he glanced upward. Ruthven's body crashed against the swaying mast with a sickening sound. Scarlett did not move away from the wheel.

He did not look up again, but he was not able to stop his ears. Back and forth, back and forth went the body against the mast. The sound of the violent impact rang in Scarlett's hearing until he began to sing, to shout—anything to shut out the sound.

Thud—thud—*crash!*

Perspiration burst from Scarlett's pores and ran clammily down his face. Automatically his hand rose to wipe his eyes free, his shouting torn from his mouth and borne away on the night wind. . .

CHAPTER XIV

NATUI TALKS

SCARLETT hurried the *Flying Spaniard* toward Moselle. Inasmuch as he had quarreled with Ruthven ostensibly on the question of putting back, the situation appealed to his grim sense of humor. By all the laws of logic he should have been within sight of Tungas, instead of viewing the turret-like pile that was Moselle. A day and a night had passed since he had cut down what remained of Ruthven and flung it to the sharks, and now Moselle loomed ahead. He stared with red rimmed eyes at the land.

Pau Tiau was at the wheel. Scarlett took out his gun and examined it carefully. Most likely that tribe on Moselle had got Gillian all dressed up in garlands by this time. He could guess what they would do. They would wait till nightfall before they surrounded her and led her away to become the white goddess of Moselle. There would be a feast—wild dancing under the moon—the beat of drums.

Pau Tiau was singing and the boys stood by while the ship drew inshore. With a mighty effort Scarlett braced himself for the struggle that must come. It was not to be supposed that the tribe would submit to the departure of their goddess. He went below and took a stiff peg. Then, slowly, carefully, he shaved a two days' beard. He plunged his head into a bowl of cold water and sleeked back the dripping hair from a colorless face. Pau Tiau's voice hailed him from above, and he went up the companion.

"Sekeleti," said Pau Tiau anxiously, "you go all same find Gillian?"

"Yes."

"All same bad," pursued Pau Tiau. "Him Kanaka likem white man. Suppose Kanaka say Sekeleti stop all same longatime?"

Scarlett hesitated.

"Pau Tiau savvy talk belong Moselle," said the Kanaka with pride. "Suppose Pau Tiau go."

"Right. You look-see find Gillian."

Pau Tiau was rowed in state to the beach. He landed, waved a dignified farewell to Scarlett aboard the *Flying Spaniard*, and disappeared among the palms.

Then began for Scarlett a weary time. He paced up and down the deck till the boys eyed him with concern. For all his cruelty, his savage outbursts of anger, his boys admired him. They boasted secretly of his strength. Occasionally he would feel a timid hand on his bare arm. The Kanakas believed that by touching him they would absorb some of his power. They slunk away as he paced monotonously about the deck. No one but a fool would cross Sekeleti's path when his face was set like that . . .

The sun reached noon height, and there was no sign of Pau Tiau. Moselle lay dreaming in the midday heat and, as Scarlett stared at this land that held so many secrets, a deadly fear crept over him that he was too late. His nerves were strained to the breaking point. Every minute was an hour. Every hour seemed a day. And he waited for seven hours.

Pau Tiau came back in the shadows of sunset. He carried a small cask of water —his apparent reason for landing. Lights gleamed among the trees. Curious shapes sauntered amid the gloom of the palms. The boys bent their backs to the oars, well aware of Scarlett's impatience. Pau Tiau himself had acquired a bearing that was almost regal. Swelling with importance, he would not raise a hand to steady the longboat against the ship's side. Nor would his pursed lips emit a syllable until he stood before Scarlett.

"Spit it out," said Scarlett, beside himself with impatience. "Spit it out, fool. You find Gillian?"

Well aware of the sensation his news would produce, Pau Tiau flung up his arms in a gesture of theatrical despair; but Scarlett's eyes did not relent.

"Him Gillian all same gone."

"Gone?" echoed Scarlett stupidly.

"O Sekeleti, Pau Tiau find Kanaka belong Moselle. Kanaka say him Gillian in boat all same—"

"Well?"

Pau Tiau swallowed.

"All same belong white man," he said reluctantly.

"What white man?"

"Him say one, two, three white man. Big chief belong Moselle want white man stay all same longatime. White man him frighten. No stay. Kanaka all same damn fierce."

So Gillian had been taken off the island! The hundred to one chance had come off. Sometimes no boat touched Moselle in a year. Most likely she'd been taken off in daylight, too. Those beggars were scared of coming out till night time. It must have been on the same day that he himself had left her there. The hundredth chance!

But was it chance?

"Pau Tiau," he said. "You—"

Pau Tiau flung out nervous hands.

"Torikil," he said. "All same Torikil. Him Kanaka say white man all same belong call Torikil."

Torquil!

There was a breathless silence. Sea and sky rocked around Scarlett. Torquil! Then it wasn't chance. Hell, what a fool ever to have dreamed that he would be safe from Torquil! Didn't they say in the islands that Torquil got what he wanted, even if it were ten years afterward? The *Peregrine* must have come through by way of the Hombergs, then. There was no other way to account for her appearance on the very heels of the *Flying Spaniard*. Four days ago—where were they now?

"You tellem all same lie," he said to Pau Tiau.

Pau Tiau said nothing. In the gloom his dark eyes stared back into his master's and Scarlett flung him away. Truth—he himself must find that out. At the thought of Gillian his heart stood still.

"God!" he said, and went blindly to the wheel.

The boys ran for the anchor. Soon its flukes lay wet and gleaming under the

lantern. The mainsail bellied under an offshore breeze. The *Flying Spaniard* slid into the night.

Scarlett planned to make straight for Tungas. It was there that he might pick up news of Torquil and the *Peregrine*. He had neither food nor water to enable him to make a prolonged search for the ship that had pursued him from Amanu. And Gillian—would she have told Torquil the destination of the *Flying Spaniard?*

"Pau Tiau," he called in a harsh broken voice.

A shadow rose at his right hand and took the wheel from him without a word. He went unsteadily to the companion and lurched down the steps into the cabin. With hands that shook he pulled off his coat. His dragging feet crossed the floor to his bunk and he lay down.

He turned this way and that, torn with a thousand fears. Through the starlit night the ship ploughed steadily toward Tungas. What the hell was that?

Scarlett sprang up, broad awake, sweating. A sound—a dull, heavy sound like a body swinging against the mast.

Thud—thud—*crash!* . . .

II

TWO DAYS after the raft was sighted the *Henry James* reached Tungas at sundown.

Tungas is a cone shaped island enclosed by a reef against which the waves break with unceasing roar. Seen for the first time against an evening sky it seems the quintessence of all the beauty in the South Pacific. There is about it some subtle quality which distinguishes it from all other islands. Men come back to it again and again. Kahina has the most wonderful coral reefs in the world; Port Edward Island has its bay; Wakatea its mysterious ravine; Les Aves its sacred river. But Tungas has the essence of beauty itself—that mysterious, incommunicable enchantment that sets the heart beating so fast.

Callaghan discussed the matter with Sam Harvey as they listened to the grating of the anchor chain. The men of Tungas had blown up part of the reef to make a harbor entrance and the *Henry James* lay in the lagoon.

"I've been here time and again," said Harvey thoughtfully, "and the place gets me afresh every time. Now why? There's a hundred other places prettier than Tungas."

Callaghan shook his head.

"There's no sayin'," he said. "It's just—different, that's all."

Harvey nodded. His roving eye caught sight of Gillian.

"That gal," he said in a lower tone. "Whose is she?"

"Nobody's," said Callaghan. "An' if your George Peters don't take care, he'll get his fingers burned. Look at him now hoverin' round like a herring gull."

They watched Peters stroll up to Gillian with an air of elaborate unconcern.

"Hopin' I don't intrude," he said unctuously. "Good evenin'."

"Good evening," said Gillian politely. "Yes, it is cooler now, and I have never been to Tungas before. Thank you, I feel very much better, and I am sure the others do as well. I have already been shown over the ship four times today, and I really couldn't face it again. No, I do not mind wearing the mate's new slacks and Mr. Harvey's second best coat. I know quite well that I look more beautiful in them than in any other clothes. Yes, ninety-seven men have told me I am beautiful. Well, what shall we talk about now?"

But Mr. Peters had retreated. Gillian smiled and began to finger one of the brass buttons on the sack-like coat that enveloped her.

"Bit hard on him, weren't you?"

She did not turn at Torquil's voice, but the smile died.

"Is it ever wise to be anything else?"

"You've never been in love," said Torquil. "You're cold, Gillian."

"Perhaps," she said shortly.

He was looking at the island.

"Don't ever go ashore alone," he

warned her. "And don't go with any one except me or Callaghan. This place is a hell hole." His face hardened. "I wonder if we're too late to get him?"

"Scarlett?"

"Yes. I'm going ashore to see if I can pick up any news. There's just a chance that he mayn't be in yet."

"I don't see the *Flying Spaniard*."

"She may be anchored beyond the point." He glanced at her curiously.

"Gillian, I'm sorry for the harsh things I said to you when we picked you up on Moselle. It was because of Blaise."

It was the first time that the dead boy's name had fallen between them. Gillian went very white.

"Do you think I don't blame myself? You'll never forgive me—and I shan't ever forgive myself."

"I had a damn good reason"—Torquil broke off short. "Here, we seem to be starting it all over again."

Impulsively Gillian held out her hand. He took it quickly.

"I suppose it's thanks to you that I'm alive," said the girl.

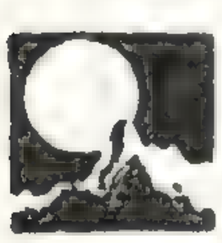
"Don't think about it," Torquil said. "It's all over for you."

She looked up, startled.

"And you?"

"My time's coming now," he reminded her grimly. "When I meet Scarlett . . ."

She drew away from him and walked slowly to where Harvey and Callaghan watched night creep over Tungas. Left alone, Torquil stared at the darkening water.



LIGHTS were showing ashore. Beach fires gleamed by the water's edge, sending long reflections that danced across the lagoon. The tinny tunes of five years before wheezed raucously from the cabin where Mr. Peters had retired to console himself with an aged gramophone. Callaghan lounged up.

"What about goin' ashore?"

"Right. But I reckon we've missed him."

"We may pick up his tracks," said Callaghan. "Harvey says we can have the dinghy any time. The boys are gettin' it out."

"What about Gillian?"

"Leave her here."

"It's not safe."

"My Gawd, Torquil, after all you've said to that gal, are you carin' whether she's safe or not?"

"Shut up," said Torquil. "We're going ashore." Then he called to Gillian, "Come on. Yes, in those togs. Shove your hair out of sight." He turned to Sam Harvey.

"God knows when we'll be back, or if we'll be back at all. For all you've done for us—thanks. We won't forget it."

"Put it there," said Harvey, reaching out a hairy paw. "Have you got any cash?"

"No, but Callaghan's got a few dollars."

Harvey fished out some money.

"Miss Ruthven will have to have some duds," he said. "No—take it, you fool. Hey, you boys, you all same make haste."

Striding away to avoid further thanks, he went to hustle the Kanakas who were busy with the dinghy.

At last they were away. The dinghy shot across the lagoon toward the lights. Callaghan loaded his pipe thoughtfully.

The shore drew nearer. Across the water drifted the high, sweet singing of women's voices. There was a thick scent of spices in the still air. The magic of the southern night lay over Tungas, wearing a spell as old as time itself. Torquil leaned forward to where Gillian's face showed like a dim flower. Her hand lay idly beside his and he felt a strange mad desire to take it. But the time was not yet. For him there must be no other being in the world but Scarlett . . . The boat crunched on the sand and he sprang out to lift the girl ashore.

The Kanakas shouted a farewell and pushed off. Left alone, the three stood still, rejoicing in the feel of solid ground beneath their feet. Presently Callaghan bent down and scooped up a handful of sand.

"Blimey, but it's good to feel it again," he said. "Well, come on."

"Where away?"

Callaghan puffed meditatively.

"Best make for McCarthy's," he said. "I ain't seen him this nine year. But I reckon he's still hangin' out in the same old shack."

They turned to the right, along a wide road that led away from the sea into the heart of the island. Many people jostled against them. Kanakas walked here and there carrying huge, flaring torches.

"The town's straight ahead," said Callaghan.

They pushed on through the stream. Soon they entered the town proper and here it was quieter. All the life had betaken itself to that stretch of road between the town and the sea.

"This way," said Callaghan.

They turned down an alley that led to a small house where a lighted lantern hung above an open door. A pungent smell of tobacco greeted them as Callaghan stepped forward.

"What cheer, Mac!"

There was the scraping sound of a chair pushed back across a hard floor. Into a lighted doorway came a bearded figure that bent and peered, and drew back again.

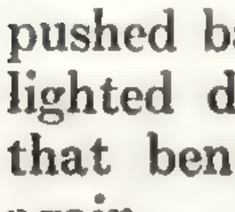
"Mac!"

"Gorblimey!" said a startled voice. "If it ain't Callaghan!"

"You alive then?" said Callaghan gruffly. "Here, all right, all right. Look, I got a couple of friends here."

"Come in, come in, all," said old McCarthy. He was trembling a little and Callaghan put out an arm to steady him.

"Oh, God," said McCarthy suddenly. "You smell of the sea."



McCARTHY was hospitable. He drew up stools to the square table and produced three glasses and a horn cup. There was Irish and there was Scotch, and for Gillian he made coffee. The sharp, deep-set old eyes wandered from one face to another, and rested at last on Gillian. She had pulled off her cap and the lamplight fell full on her flushed face and bright hair.

"You're lookin' fine," said Callaghan, his mouth full of pork.

"Aye," McCarthy assented. "I'm not so bad."

He twisted a button on his coat with nervous fingers.

"I reckon it's as blue as ever it was?" he burst out at last.

"What—the sea?"

McCarthy nodded.

"Blue as ever," Callaghan assured him. "Thank you, jest a finger."

Gillian waited till his glass was filled.

"Haven't you seen the sea lately, Mr. McCarthy?" she asked.

"Not for near thirty year."

"Why not?" said Gillian in surprise. "Oh, I'm sorry. Only I—"

"No need to be sorry," said McCarthy. "You see, missie, I know that it's waitin' for me. It nearly had me twenty-nine year ago. I beat it then. It's waited to get me ever since. That's why I won't go nigh it—won't see it even. That's why I live up in the town—out of sight, out of sound of it. Folks think I'm mad."

"Well, well," said Callaghan hastily. "That's the best meal I've had in twelve months. Now, listen, Mac. Here's the yarn . . ."

For nearly half an hour Callaghan's voice boomed through the little room. Old McCarthy listened to the end. When the tale was over he filled up glasses all round. Torquil leaned across the table impatiently.

"Do you know Scarlett?"

"I've seen him."

"Is he in town?"

"The *Flying Spaniard*, ain't it? Why, I heard down the street that she came in this morning early and anchored round the point."

Torquil sprang to his feet.

"He's here, then."

"Most likely he's here," agreed McCarthy. "Sit down, sit down, can't you? You can't go lookin' for him this time of night."

"Wait a bit," said Callaghan. "Mac's right. It would be damn foolish to—"

"Hold your tongue! McCarthy, do you know where he goes when he's ashore? Do you know if he sleeps aboard?" He glanced round. "Have you got a boy?"

McCarthy whistled and a dark head appeared round the door.

"Aleuto, you savvy one fella Sekeleti?"

The Kanaka shook his head.

"No savvy."

"Oh," said Gillian. "Natui—ask him if he knows Natui."

"Savvy Natui," said Aleuto, his eyes brightening. "Natui all same boy belong Rutian."

"Rutian?"

"Ruthven," Gillian explained. "Natui's afraid of Scarlett. He never liked him the way he liked my brother. He always used to say he was Rutian's boy."

"Must find Natui," McCarthy ordered, and Aleuto vanished.

"All the native crews make straight for the longhouse on the west side," said McCarthy. "It's like a club. An' I tell you what. We white men ain't got no secrets from 'em. We may think we have, but we ain't. They're sharp as needles."

DOWN in the longhouse Aleuto was sitting on his haunches listening to Natui. High above them the roof melted into darkness. The air was thick and poisonous. At the far end a fire burned. Great carved images of painted wood stood round the walls.

"What does your master want with me?"

"He is very great, my master. Strangers have come in. They are looking for Rutian and Sekeleti."

Natui frowned.

"Sekeleti is in Tungas. He goes to sell jewels. A green snake. I have seen it. He killed a man to get it. He will go to Sen, I think."

"And Rutian?"

"Rutian is dead," said Natui shortly. "Sekeleti thinks we do not know. Fool! Sekeleti killed him."

"Ah," said Aleuto, deeply impressed. "Your Sekeleti is a great man."

"Rutian had strength like a shark. But Sekeleti was his master. There was a woman, too."

"With bright hair?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"She is with the strangers."

"Then I will not go up," said Natui definitely. Nor could anything that Aleuto urged alter his determination. "It is Torikil who is with her. Pau Tiau learned at Moselle that he had taken her. I will not go up."

In vain Aleuto, with the fear of McCarthy before him, prayed, coaxed, reviled. Natui continued to eat roasted yam with supreme indifference. Finally a woebegone Aleuto backed out of the longhouse and went slowly up the hill. McCarthy met him wrathfully at the door.

"Come on, damn your hide! Where've you been?"

"O Makuati, him Natui say no come."

"He tell you Sekeleti in Tungas?"

"Natui say Sekeleti go find him Sen."

"Sen—why?"

"I'll tell you that," said Callaghan, from within the room. "To sell jewels. Hey, boy?"

"Natui say."

"And Ruthven's with him?" queried Torikil. "Him Rutian go long Sekeleti?"

Aleuto shifted wretchedly from one foot to the other.

"Natui say him Rutian all same—all same dead. Him Sekeleti kill."

"Kill?"

"No more savvy," said Aleuto to McCarthy. "Him Natui all same one fella pig—damn fool. He say Sekeleti all same fool suppose Natui no savvy him Rutian all same dead."

"Dead!"

They turned at Gillian's voice. She was on her feet, swaying.

"Steady!" said Torquil. "A drop of brandy—quick!"

He made her sit down and held the

glass to her lips. She did not cry, but sat in McCarthy's deep chair, staring straight before her. Torquil straightened himself and put the glass back on the table.

"Who is this Sen?"

"A beauty," said Callaghan. "He was here before the flood. I've met the blighter. Done a couple of—er—deals with him, back along. Cheated me both times, too, damn his eyes."

He knocked his cap—lately the property of Duck Rafferty—over his eyes, and buttoned his jacket.

"Guess we ain't got too much time," he said. "Same old hangout, I suppose, Mac?"

McCarthy nodded. Torquil and Callaghan exchanged glances and edged toward the door. Gillian raised quick eyes.

"Are you going—now?"

"May as well."

"I'm coming too."

"Did you ever?" said Callaghan helplessly. "Sit down an' behave, girl. This ain't goin' to be nothin' for a woman to see."

Gillian stamped.

"I'm coming."

She was flushed now, stormy eyed, defiant. Torquil, stung by her beauty, stared. Then the gravity of the situation smote him. He crossed the room and put his hands on her shoulders.

"You're to stay here."

"No!"

"Yes," he said with a sudden fury. "You'll do what I say. Sit down. *Sit down* when you're told! Do you think I want a woman tagging after me?"

"Blaise is dead," said Gillian. "My brother is dead. And if you—" she stopped.

"If I die, it won't matter to you."

"Come on," urged Callaghan, from the door. "Here, Mac, a minute. Which road is it to Sen's?"

McCarthy hobbled across the room. In the doorway he and Callaghan stood, silhouetted against the stars.

"Torquil," said Gillian.

"Well? You're to stay here."

"Promise you'll come back!"

"I hope so. But you'll be all right. Callaghan will look after you. And I've told Duck to come up before they sail. He'll see after you—show you how you can get back to your own folks, if I'm not here."

"You've thought all this out?"

"When there's a woman, some one's always got to make plans for her."

"Even when she's—an enemy?"

"An enemy—"

"Well, it's true. You hated me. You hate me now, really, because of Blaise."

"No."

He looked down at her. Even the seaman's clothes they had given her aboard the *Henry James* could not disguise the beauty of her slim body. He leaned forward, stooping till his face was level with hers.

"Let me come with you," she begged again.

"No," he said.

For answer she raised her hand and struck him across the mouth.

He did not put his hand to his bruised lips, but he caught her fingers in his and held them fast. For a moment they stared into each other's furious, hostile eyes. Torquil's face quivered suddenly. Without a word he bent and kissed her.

Then he was gone and she sat alone, listening to the sound of hurrying footsteps dying away in the night.

CHAPTER XV

MANTRAP

AFTER a haunted voyage that graved new lines about Scarlett's mouth, the *Flying Spaniard* put in at Tungas. She drove into the harbor under the early sun, and the boys sang at sight of land again. Scarlett locked the cabin doors and took the emerald snake from the bottom of an iron bound chest. He wrapped the shining thing in a fragment of faded crimson silk before he laid it in his belt.

He fastened the clasp and went on deck.

The beauty of Tungas held him for an instant before he swung overside into the waiting longboat. Mists were rising from the valleys between those rounded hills. The palms had that queer, glassy look that comes over them at dawn. Peering down through the clear green water, Scarlett watched the gold and pink striped fish swimming in terror from the shadow of the oars.

At that hour the highroad was deserted except for Kanakas. Scarlett walked into town without meeting a single white. He went straight to Harris's. Harris's was a kind of exchange, where all the business of Tungas was whispered over. Harris himself was a sleek, pockmarked fellow, with his English father's gray eyes, his Chinese mother's full lips and wide nostrils, and a brain that owed its astuteness to a maternal grandfather.

"How do, Harris. A gin-and-it."

"You're lookin' bad, Mr. Scarlett, sir," said Harris, in his slow, lisping drawl. "I hope you had a good voyage?"

"Who's in town?"

"Oh, there's a good many gentlemen in town, sir—a good many."

"Any particular—friends?"

Their eyes met.

"Do you mean—"

"Is Torquil here?"

"I didn't know you were—friendly with Mr. Torquil." Harris leered at him. "He's not a gentleman I'd care to know much about. I hope this will be to your taste, sir."

"Damn good," said Scarlett, as he swallowed the drink and put down the empty glass.

"Are you expecting any one?" purred the soft voice. "I see you keep looking at the door, Mr. Scarlett, sir. Is Mr. Ruthven—mind the glass, sir! ah, well, an accident—is Mr. Ruthven in with you?"

"No."

"I'm sorry," said Harris. "He's still aboard, I suppose?"

"What the hell is it to you? Is Torquil in town?"

"I haven't seen him, Mr. Scarlett, sir."

"Is his boat in?"

"I haven't heard so."

"Well, if—if he or any one else comes asking for me, you don't know anything, see?"

"Of course, Mr. Scarlett, sir."

"And if—"

"If Mr. Ruthven comes in? What am I to tell him?"

"He won't come," said Scarlett shortly. "Look alive with that change. Here—no Dutch money, thanks. Well, so long."

"So long, Mr. Scarlett, sir."

The bartender watched Scarlett stroll away into the street. He stared reflectively at those slim, powerful shoulders, and wondered just why Scarlett wanted to avoid Torquil. Oh, well, it wasn't his business. Whatever quarrels are afoot, men must drink. He began to polish glasses, whistling as he worked.

Scarlett sauntered through the town, alert for any sign of Torquil. If the tale of the Moselle Kanakas were true, then the fellow should be on Tungas by now. Gillian would have told him where to make for. Most likely he was lurking somewhere, waiting. Scarlett had a queer feeling that some one was dogging him. He looked round now and again, but there was no one.

It was too early to go to Sen's. The Chinese refused to transact any business till night. Scarlett strolled the length of the town and back again, until the sun was high.

Moodily he then turned toward Harris's again. Of course, he could go to Sen's and force an interview. But he knew how that would end. Sen would refuse to buy. Scarlett's hands stole to his belt. He must sell the thing quickly. He must rid himself of everything that had belonged to his life since that night on Kilea. The dead man's shadow stands beside the spoil, says the thieves' proverb. Well, it was proving true, as far as he was concerned. His luck had been out ever since he lifted the snake out of Moreau's hands. A feverish desire seized him to get the deal over and clear out of this white, strange town. He would get a

fresh crew and go up to the Carolines; go pearling, perhaps, or take a share in the trepang carrying trade between Paviete and Wakatea.

IT WAS nearly three o'clock when he reached Harris's. The bar was empty except for an Italian boy who lay snoring in his chair, an overturned glass before him. The whisky had meandered over the table and was dripping on the floor. Harris himself came forward at sight of Scarlett.

"Oh, Mr. Scarlett, sir, will you take something? There's a little dish of chicken outside." He rubbed his hands anxiously. "A little, yes? And some white wine?"

Scarlett nodded and sat down.

"It's chilly in here," he said abruptly.

"Chilly, Mr. Scarlett?"

Harris went away to superintend the little dish of chicken. The bare room with its shuttered windows was very quiet. Only the slow drip of the sleeper's whisky broke the stillness.

Drip—drip—drip—

Scarlett rose impatiently, found Harris's best glass cloth and mopped up the spilled liquor.

Harris came in, preceded by a boy bearing the food. He set it down before Scarlett with pride, and waved the boy away. Scarlett sniffed appreciatively.

"Smells good."

"And so it should," said Harris, pleased. "It is of my own making. I take a young chicken and stew it. Then the tender meat is roasted between *ti* leaves, then cut very fine. Slices of pork so thin you can almost see through them must next be prepared. All a work of time and art, Mr. Scarlett, sir. Then sago—cooked with herbs and sweetened with honey. Then toss all together so lightly, so lightly, with a two-pronged fork. For a garnish, sometimes slices of sweet orange, sometimes of lime. Ah, delicious!"

"Damn good," Scarlett agreed. "Another glass, Harris—and shut that door, will you? There's a draft."

Harris shrugged politely incredulous shoulders and fastened the door. Privately he decided that Scarlett had a touch—a very slight touch—of sun. Presently he brought a fresh bottle of the Old Highland and opened it.

"I'll have a brandy instead," said Scarlett suddenly. "I—I don't feel—"

"You don't look well, either," said Harris. "The French brandy, sir? Yes, I remember."

The oily voice was solicitous. He poured out the brandy and saw Scarlett's hand shake slightly as he took the glass.

"Any sign of Torquil?"

"No, sir."

"No one come for me at all?"

"Only Mr. Ruthven, sir."

Scarlett swayed to his feet.

"*What!*"

"Came in just after you'd gone, sir. He was going out again when I saw him. I suppose he'd been looking for you. I called to him and told him you'd gone into town."

"Did he answer?" Scarlett was whispering.

"No, sir. Just lifted a hand to show he'd heard. He had his back to me, just going out of the door. I didn't see his face."

Scarlett almost screamed, "He hasn't got a face! When I cut him down I tried not to look! But—I saw!"

No sound came from his throat. He sagged into his chair again, his breath whistling through his nostrils.

"Did he follow you, sir?" inquired Harris.

Suddenly Scarlett knew why he had felt cold . . .

"He's been following me all day," he said. "I'll settle with you later on, Harris. I'm going out."

He lurched across the room like a drunken man and flung the door wide. It wanted another hour yet before he could call on Sen. Never mind, he would go now. Yes, he would go and do the best he could with the old thief, and then sail away from this haunted island forever. In a sudden wild panic he looked up and

down the street. Harris, coming to the door, saw him running toward the town—running with mad haste, as though he would outstrip the shadow that raced beside him.

Sen was very old. No one could remember when he had first come to Tungas. He looked like an aged monkey as he sat in his carved chair, waving a little ivory fan to and fro. His skin was like yellow parchment now, and there was but little flesh on his claw-like hands. He was wrapped in a yellow silk gown, heavily embroidered. In his crimson sash was thrust a knife that had been fashioned in Castile three hundred years ago for a Spanish king. The ring on his shrunken finger had belonged to a dead sultan. About his ropy throat hung the pearls that a Chicago pork packer had scoured the world to find. On a lacquer table beside him stood a blue vase that contained a single spray of jasmine. Sometimes he lifted it to his face that his pale lips might cool themselves against the scented leaves.

On a pedestal a lamp had been placed. Below the window was a courtyard where a fountain played. The murmuring sound of women's voices came on the still air. A pair of wooden heels clattered across the stones and was quickly hushed. Sen heard the pattering noise while he listened to Scarlett.

"I regret," he said presently in his slow, careful English, "that you have not waited. I said at sunset."

"I was in a hurry," said Scarlett sullenly.

The yellow face remained inscrutable.

"If the honorable Scarlett requires anything of this person, let him speak without fear."

SCARLETT moistened his lips and began to unfasten his belt. Without a word he brought out the emerald snake and held it up. In silence the two pairs of eyes gloated over its beauty. Finally Sen took it carelessly.

"Worthless," he said in a musing tone.

"Almost worthless. I should rob myself if I were to buy it from honorable Scarlett."

"Then I will not trouble you about it," said Scarlett, who knew his man. "If you'll hand it back, I will go."

"Not so," returned Sen, a trifle hurriedly. "Perhaps we can agree on a sum. But the emeralds are of poor size."

"They are large and perfectly flawless. That's why the thing's valuable. Why, it's the hardest job in the world to find emeralds that size without flaws. And see how they've been cut. There's a master's hand there. Looks like Chinese work to me."

"It is Chinese. Most probably the work of an illustrious man. My own worthless opinion would say that it came from the workshop of Ch'ian Foo, who has unfortunately been food for worms these two centuries past."

He raised his little sharp eyes.

"What sum will content you?"

In polite circumlocution they began to haggle. Scarlett asked twice what he expected to get. Sen mentioned just half the sum that he knew he would pay in the end. Two hours wore away, and no agreement could be reached. Finally Scarlett began to lose his temper.

"The thing's priceless, and you've got me in a corner. I won't let it go so cheaply. You know I'm in a hurry, and you're just fooling about. Well, you've made a mistake."

His sallow face was flushed, his eyes very bright. His mouth set in an ugly line.

"Give it here. I'm going to sell it somewhere else. Old Pitts over the other end of the town would give me double."

He wrapped the snake in the faded silk again and laid it in his belt. Sen's eyes flashed angrily.

"My friend will do what appears wise to him. But the despicable Pitts will perhaps ask—questions."

"Why should I care?"

"No one would be such a fool as to suppose the history of such gems to be unknown," answered Sen smoothly. "In

his intolerable curiosity Pitts may inquire what price was paid for them to the last owner. Or whether," said the Chinese, his eyes on the ceiling, "any price was paid at all."

There was silence.

"Who's that outside?" said Scarlett, suddenly.

"My servants have orders to admit no one."

"I tell you there's some one there. Listen! There—a scraping sound!"

Scarlett went to the door. It was bolted on the inside. Cautiously he drew bolts and opened the door. Instantly a man sprang at him. The door swung back and the lamplight fell on Torquil's face.

With all his strength, Scarlett broke away, stumbling down the narrow passage to the door that led into the street. Behind him he could hear the heavy rush of pursuit. He shot through the door and slammed it behind him. Out on the moonlit road he looked neither to right nor left. He fled frantically ahead.

He must get aboard at once. But—was it probable that Torquil would leave that way of escape unguarded? Most likely Callaghan was down there now, lurking by the beach, waiting . . .

He must hide—bide his time for a bit. If he could lay low for a bit, he'd be able to get away. Like a hunted animal he paused, his head up, his breath coming in great gasps as he listened for sound of his enemy.

Two streets away Torquil paused for breath. His knuckles were bleeding and he sucked at them as he rested. What a fool to let the fellow slip like this! He had been so sure. That was why he had told Callaghan there was no need for one of them to go down by the shore. Callaghan, wiser, had insisted.

"He's like an eel, that Scarlett," he had said. "If he twists away, he'll get clear. An' we're not losing him again, see?"

And he had left Torquil at Sen's door and gone away down to the shore again.

TORQUIL listened. There was no sound save the dull murmur of the crowd on the searoad. Would Scarlett make for that place and try to escape in the crush? Or would he lurk in some corner till dawn? Maybe there was some woman to whom he would go for shelter. And there were the hills. Torquil lifted his eyes and stared at the rounded heights that stood out so darkly against the starlit sky. A wave of loneliness swept over him. He had a sudden, intense longing for Blaise.

With many backward glances he began to walk toward the searoad. It seemed likely that Scarlett would make for there. At every sound Torquil halted, drew against the shadowed wall, listening with strained ears. Men passed him, quietly, furtively, bent on dark errands of their own. He realized, as he had never before, the evil spell that lay over the place—despite its almost unbearable beauty. It seemed it was only on the searoad that men's tongues were loosened in natural talk. The soundlessness that reigned in the streets grew almost terrifying to his taut nerves. It was with relief that he plunged at last into the chattering throng that crowded the wide road leading down to the shore.

Here were gathered all sorts and conditions of men. Traders, pearlers, blackbirders rubbed elbows. Each side of the road was lined with vendors who hawked their wares in high, screaming voices. Bargaining went on in shrill, quarrelsome tones. Arabs, Chinese, Malays were the sellers, and the buyers were Americans, Portuguese, English, with here and there a stolid Dutchman, or a Frenchman. About them all swarmed Kanakas—pushing, chattering, scolding, as they followed their masters or ran with purchases. Every seller had a bodyguard.

Torquil pushed his way through the crowd, searching for a sallow face and a thin, sullen mouth. Past the jade seller he went; past the man whose Kanakas guarded a piece of velvet where nine pearls shone like stars. A Malay had brought stolen ivory from a Burmese

temple and he cursed Torquil for a clumsy fool as he brushed past. McDermott of the *Pauline* was auctioning smuggled cases of whisky and waved to him as he went by. Torquil fought his way to him.

"Hullo—want to stand in on this?"

"Not now. Have you seen Scarlett?"

"Not since midday. Want him?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll keep my eyes open."

A surge of men carried Torquil away again. He stumbled over something and, looking down, saw that a man sprawled in the middle of the road. When Torquil tried to lift him he did not move. He had been dead two hours. Torquil lugged the body from under the heedless tramping feet and laid it beside the trees that fringed the road. Then he went on his quest again, driven by the whips of determination that lashed him toward his enemy.

Till dawn he went to and fro, up and down, watching. Once he sent a boy with a scrawled message to Callaghan, telling him that Scarlett had got away, and that he was watching the road. Callaghan sent back the one word, "hills."

When the boy found Torquil again, Torquil threw up his black head.

"Aye," he said aloud. "The hills."

CHAPTER XVI

ANCHOR AWEIGH!

SCARLETT was running through the night. Fear ran behind him, and shadowed him through the sleeping country. He knew little of the hinterland of Tungas, but some age old instinct sent him to the hills. Here a man might hide, and wait—steal down unawares on that pursuer who would surely come. He never doubted that Torquil would follow him.

That sight of Torquil had shaken him. He was losing his nerve—losing the superb, insolent assurance that had carried him through so many ticklish businesses.

The moon was high and showed him a path through the silvered palms. The wind blew lightly, and set the shadows dancing about his feet. On and on he went, till his breath came short and hard, and his heart knocked like a trip hammer against his ribs. The thin clothes clung to his body, plastered tight with sweat. Great drops stood on his neck, his forehead, rolled down his face. The fear that comes when a man runs in the darkness had him by the throat.

He plunged into a valley, heavy with the thousand odors of the Pacific night. The growth here was thicker, more difficult to combat. Great tree ferns rose up before him like fighting men, and he shied at them because of their curving shadows that twisted about his path. The *lianas* lay in wait for him like sleeping snakes. Three times he fell, and scrambled to his feet again with choked oaths. A great bat flew in his face and he beat at it with terrified hands. He crossed a noisy river by a shaky rope bridge and began the last ascent that should lead him to the vantage point he wished to gain. Leaving the bosom of the hills, he mounted up—up to the shoulder, panting, clawing through the difficult passage. A goat track guided him and he fought his way along the damp slippery path to the top of the hill.

It grew cooler as he went higher. Presently the steamy heat of the valley gave place to the crisper air that blew about the hilltop. The palms grew more sparsely here. Between their great tufted crowns the stars showed, cold, aloof, implacable. Scarlett's breath came in loud, shivering gasps that made his whole body ache. In a clear space among the grouped palms he flung himself face down on the earth and lay still for a long time.

He slept, as men sleep in the intervals of torture. When he looked at the sky again the stars were almost gone. Dazed, stiff, he sat up and ran his hands through his hair. His clothes were still damp, and he shivered in the chill air of this hour before dawn. He stood up and began to walk up and down. Presently he took out his flask. The whisky nerved him a

little and he turned to watch the sun come out of the sea.

A sound startled him. He spun round, his nervous fingers already on his gun. A clump of bushes stirred and he fired. With a choking grunt a wild pig leaped awkwardly into the air and then rolled over, its sides heaving windily as its life poured out from a neck wound.

Scarlett passed a clammy hand across his forehead. What the hell had possessed him? He leaned against a tree and strove to quell the panic that was rising in his throat. Over the town a mist lay. Somewhere down there was Torquil—and Gillian. He began to remember her—slowly, painfully, as though some one were carving out her image before his eyes. During the past five days the thought of Ruthven had driven out the thought of Ruthven's sister. But now, standing alone on the hill at the beginning of this strange day, whose end he might never see, his mind turned to Gillian again.

The sun was up now, and he looked across the sea of palms toward the town. The wind had dropped and Tungas lay as still as heaven. Green—green everywhere, broken with splashes of purple and yellow and scarlet, where the strange tropic flowers flaunted their waxen blossoms. What a fool he had been to fire that shot! To any one listening it would give the game away. Scarlett pulled himself together and began to seek for a way out.

THE *FLYING SPANIARD* would be watched. That went without saying. Sen's house would be watched. Probably Harris's would be watched. Lord, the place was full of spying eyes.

Then, slowly, there grew up in him a wild, reckless courage—the courage that belongs alike to the drunkard and to the desperate man. His damp hands unclasped the pocket in his belt and caressed the shining emeralds that lay coiled there. Damn it all, he'd have another shot for freedom! He must have been mad the night before, sneaking away in a panic to the shelter of the hills. Ah, but he'd been unnerved at the sudden sight of Torquil. And he'd been unnerved worse by that cold, unseen figure that dogged every step he took. But now in the sunlight he was himself again. Be damned to Torquil and Ruthven—the whole blasted lot! He straightened his shoulders and plunged into the path that led back to Tungas.

Two hundred yards ahead was a splash of red. He noticed it and wondered vaguely how such a large clump of hibiscus should grow at such a height. Then he looked again and saw that it was a red shirt.

He stopped so abruptly that he lost his balance. Too startled to rise he crouched on hands and knees, staring at that splotch of color. It was flung into the bushes beside the path. Had it been there on the previous night he must have trampled on it as he passed. A red shirt . . .

Keeping low, he began to hurry toward it, running down the path with his mind intent on this phenomenon. His eyes raked the palms as he went by, but no fluttering rag or protruding leg marked the presence of a man. He reached the shirt and picked it up. Some one must have realized what a mark it presented and ripped it off. But who—and where was he?

He spun round, quivering, in a frenzy of fear. Maybe he was covered by Torquil's gun at that very moment. Instinctively he dropped, scrambling to the nearest tree, crouching there with the trunk firm against his back. In his throat a pulse was beating, and he put up a hand to stop it. His eyes, bright like the eyes of a cornered rat, searched for some sign of the enemy. But he could see no one. Only the red shirt lay there still, like a splash of heart's blood among the palms.

He must either stay or go. Stay—and be potted like a sitting rabbit, toppled over to rot where he lay. Or he could go, taking his life between his hands in a wild dash for the shelter of the valley,

where the thick undergrowth offered a refuge. A running target is more difficult to hit, he reflected. Up, then, and make a dash for it. Half a mile down the goat track he would hit the valley.

He braced himself and stepped away from the tree. Hardly had he moved when a shot rang out to the left and a bullet grazed the bark. For a moment he stood—dazed, stupefied. Then he began to run—mad, headlong running that sent him flying down the twisting path toward the valley. His feet tore over the ground like the feet of a hunted beast. His heart pumped so fast that it seemed the blood must rise into his throat and choke him. Yet he dared not pause, turn his head. Down—down to where the bushes grew more thickly and the lazy song of the stream rose on the scented air. The *lianas* tried to catch him, but he strode and leaped and defeated them, his breath sawing in his throat, his clenched hands thrust before him to ward off he knew not what. Suddenly he spun round in the path.

Torquil was fifty yards behind. His bronzed body was bare to the waist. Leaping down the path he came—and Scarlett fired, aiming at that great chest. But his hand was not steady. Torquil swerved and the bullet lost itself in the undergrowth. He did not stop to return the shot, but came on, until Scarlett could see the fierce eyes, the grim triumphant smile that curved his lips. His nerve went like a snapped string. He turned and fled down the path.

He reached the mass of *frangipani* that he remembered passing in the night. Where was Torquil now? He turned his head, and in that moment the treacherous *lianas* seized his foot, sending him headlong. His gun was jerked out of his hand. He plunged after it, crashing through the *tui-tui* bushes until his fingers closed on the muzzle.

Pounding feet went by and he realized that Torquil had shot past at the bend of the path that led down to the bridge. Scarlett crouched where he was, not daring to move. Would the fellow pick up the scent? Yes, he had stopped, questing like a hound at fault. Peering with bloodshot eyes through the thicket, Scarlett watched him.

Torquil paused, irresolute. Where the hell had the fellow got to? Well aware of the target he presented, he dropped, edging into the shelter of a giant tree fern that rose amid the tangled vegetation. If Scarlett had gone far into the bushes it would be almost hopeless to follow him. Ah, but there must be no escape for this killer of Manisty. Torquil wiped his face with the back of his hand and forced himself to consider the position. Scarlett would make for the river, then the town, and ultimately the *Flying Spaniard*. To do this, he must go to the right.

The right . . .

Torquil stared at the jungle through which he must plunge if he would reach his enemy. He spat on his hands and crashed through the undergrowth.

SCARLETT was making for the river. Far below he could hear the gurgle and splash of racing water against the boulders which dotted the stream. He moved as quietly as he could, hurrying with infinite caution, choosing a zig-zag path through the tangled growth. Down he dropped, rolling where he could, sliding, slipping, until the boggy soil told him he was nearing the stream. Through a green mist he could see the swirling water, and he rubbed his hands unconsciously at sight of it. He'd have to be careful, crossing.

The noise of the rushing water drowned any sound that might show Torquil's position. Scarlett put one foot in the water.

The turbulent stream was not more than thirty-five yards across, but he would be unprotected. He plunged into the stream. The water caught him like a cork and flung him into midriver. He struck out, resisting the pull and surge of the current in a desperate attempt to reach the opposite bank. Then above the noise he heard a shout. Looking back, he

saw Torquil. A bullet ricocheted from a stone two feet beyond his head. He dared not try to swim under water in that torrent. With feverish energy he beat his way through the river.

At last he dragged his body from the clutch of the water and lay gasping among the wet stones at the edge of the bank. He felt as though he had been dragged for miles beneath a harrow. Every joint, every muscle, ached painfully. Somehow he struggled to his feet and began the ascent of the slope. Glancing down, he could see Torquil crossing the river. The bare shoulders flashed in the sun sprayed water. The great arms pounded like flails through the rushing stream.

Scarlett pushed his wet hair from his face. The sun was at his back now, beating down through the tangled branches, turning him sick and faint. He had a sudden longing for the sea. What was he doing here, among this treacherous network of growing things? He must get back to the *Flying Spaniard*. Yes, yes, cried his maddened brain, get back to the ship! There only lay security. There only could he find relief. He remembered that Callaghan was probably lying in wait for him somewhere by the beach road. Blaise, too. Where would that fellow be? Never mind. He must make the ship. Gradually that desire swept all else from his mind. Scarlett gathered himself up and began to run. By the time Torquil struggled to the top of the slope he had more than two hundred yards start.

Torquil did not pause. He fought back the choking sensation in his throat and walked, getting back his wind and his strength as he could. Soon he broke into a steady lope. He had a good bit to make up, but he was not fool enough to dash at it. Bit by bit his strides grew longer, faster, until he had cut down the distance between them by half. Scarlett was making for the sea. He had reached the sand and turned east. Torquil swerved and cut across country to the left.

The distance between them lessened. Now Scarlett was running like a winded fox. His eyes stared straight before him, his mouth slack and open. He could not hear the footsteps that pounded behind him for the pounding of his own heart. But he knew they were there.

Straight ahead the sand had been blown into low dunes. For this scant shelter Scarlett was making. Panting, he threw himself down behind the first mound and shook the remaining drops of water from his gun.

His breath came in great gasps that jerked his whole body. Crouched behind the poor rampart of the low sandhill, he tried to steady his shaking hand. Torquil was almost in range. Scarlett raised his arm to take aim.

Had some one come up behind him? Out of the corner of his eye he could see a man to the left of him. On the sand lay the shadow of an old man, with a hooked nose and a jutting beard! He turned sharply, but there was no one.

In his terror he staggered to his feet. That old proverb was true, then! The spoil lay in his belt and Moreau stood beside him. He stumbled forward a pace—and became aware of Torquil, running across the sand.

He lifted his gun . . .

Torquil halted, swerving aside in the nick of time. He could see Scarlett's white, passionate face, the black eyes staring across the sand, the cruel lips twisted in a hard smile. The fellow was cornered and he knew it; he knew this was the end . . .

Torquil's gun exploded twice. The first bullet missed by half an inch. The second found Scarlett's throat. He flung up his hands. Before Torquil could reach him he spun round and fell. And for a moment Torquil stood still, his heart strangely quiet at this, the trail's end.

Torquil knelt beside the crumpled figure. On the reef the combers broke in their everlasting battle with the rocks. Overhead two razorbills wheeled—flashes of gray against the blue. It was nearly noon and the sun stood high. Presently Torquil put up a shaking hand to protect the back of his neck from the sun.

The fierce rays beat straight down into Scarlett's open eyes—but he never moved, or turned his head.

II

"SHIP?" said Callaghan. "Well—pass them yams again—what's wrong with the *Flying Spaniard?* Reckon we've got as good a title to her as any one. Leastways, Gillian has. Scarlett an' Ruthven was part owners. What Ruthven leaves goes to Gillian . . . McCarthy, I could do with a thimbleful."

Torquil nodded. Across the table Gillian's eyes met his and then looked away again. For these two happiness was such a rare thing that they scarcely dared to take it lest it should vanish.

"That's about right," McCarthy was saying. "Better go down tomorrow an' have a look at her. Who is there to stop you, eh? This ain't Amanu, or Waka-tea."

"She's a fine ship," said Callaghan. "You come down to the beach an' have a look at her. Go on—don't be a fool!"

But McCarthy shook his head.

"Well, have it your own way—but she's a beauty."

They pushed back their chairs and rose. It was after sunset and the thin sharp wind that comes with dusk eddied in through the open door.

Since his return at midday Gillian and Torquil had hardly spoken. There had been one brief, startled cry from Gillian when she saw him standing in the doorway. But they had avoided each other, both of them uncertain, a little afraid of what was in their hearts. Remembering the hostility which had blazed between them, they hesitated to break this strange shyness that had seized them.

Presently Gillian said stiffly—

"Do you feel all right again?"

"Yes, thanks. McCarthy's a fine doctor." There was an awkward silence. Then Torquil said, "You mustn't mind what Callaghan says about having the *Flying Spaniard*. She's yours, of course. We'll buy her off you. I mean—the way Callaghan talked it sounded as if he and I would just walk aboard and up sail."

"I don't want her," said Gillian.

"But she's yours."

"Oh, take her!" she cried. "How dare you talk about buying her? Isn't it thanks to you that I'm alive? Haven't I been the cause of—if it hadn't been for me Blaise'd be alive now! Blaise— You were his friend too . . ."

"Gillian—"

"You were friends. What did I bring him, or you, but suffering? This—this truce between us can't last!"

Her voice faltered, ceased.

"Gillian, you mustn't think of it that way."

His hands reached out in the darkness and found her slim shoulders.

"I love you," he said. "What does it matter—all that's happened? Gillian, you must know it."

She was very still now, but he could feel the quick beating of her heart. Somewhere in the night a boy was singing. In the hut the voices of McCarthy and Callaghan rose and fell in friendly argument.

"You're not angry?" Torquil asked. "I had to tell you. I can't bear to go on seeing you and acting as if I don't care."

She laughed then, a fluttering little ghost of laughter.

"Do you think I didn't know?" said Gillian.

The *Flying Spaniard* soon sailed north. Fungas lay on the horizon, a dim blue memory against the sky. Scarlett's boys had accepted the change of ownership with equanimity. The ship's first port was to be Saint Joseph Island, two hundred and forty-three miles distant, where the nearest *padre* lived.

"An' after Saint Joseph?" Callaghan asked, as he stood by Torquil on deck. "What then?"

"What about the Carolines?"

"Copra?"

"We might go farther south and try the Hui pearling grounds."

"Say," said Callaghan, jerkily. "What about Amanu? Manisty's name . . ."

"We'll go there, first, if you like," answered Torquil. "Only—do you think Manisty would care? To us his name is cleared, although we never doubted him. Those two who ought to have swung for Moreau are dead. Is it going to do any good to rake it up again?"

Callaghan thought it over.

"Maybe you're right," he said at last. "And—the snake?"

Torquil took the shining thing from his belt and held it up. He looked from the jewels to the girl.

"Gillian shall decide," he said. "Moreau had no people. And most likely he stole the damn thing, anyway. Will you have it, Gillian?"

Into her cupped palms he dropped the emerald snake.

"We might sell it," suggested Callaghan dubiously. "But it's dead man's jewels. We'd have no luck with the money."

For a moment she gazed at the thing in her hand, this thing whose price was the price of blood. Then she raised a white arm high above her. The emeralds flashed in the sunlight as they shot through the air. Down, down, they fell, clearing the foam, until they vanished into the eternal oblivion of the sea.

THE END

QUEER RAILWAYS OF THE CONGO

By LAWRENCE G. GREEN

IN THE Belgian Congo, all railway engines are in charge of black engineers. These maniacs of the throttle take the trains along as though pursued by a thousand devils of the jungle. They fear neither curve nor rickety bridge nor steep descent as the wood burning locomotives go flaming through the forest. They send the monkeys gibbering back to their trees in rocket bursts of sparks. They keep the warning whistle screaming all night in a nerve shattering manner all their own.

When the Congo railways were opened, the engineers were white men. They drank so much that they had to be replaced by natives. I am not sure, however, that a whisky inspired white man would not be safer than these sober blacks.

Some of the Congo railway coaches are furnished richly, like French drawing rooms, with curtains and tapestried walls. Other trains are not so comfortable. I recall one primitive little outfit running between Pontheirville and Stanleyville. This tiny train was so roughly finished that it might have been made by a party of negro workmen in the jungle. An eccentric in search of a wash would have been disappointed. Though we crossed the equator during the night, not even drinking water was provided.

Then there is the little toy railway between Kinshasa and Matadi, where the ocean steamers lie in the estuary of the Congo. A large part of the trade of a country nearly as large as Europe travels this single track, narrow gage line.

On the tiny engine were two black engineers, two black firemen and a black whistler. These were men of importance, and they lost no opportunity of impressing the people of wayside villages. They announced their coming with long blasts of the whistle, they stopped to haggle over the price of paw-paws, they rattled on over the mountains merely to reach fresh villages and delay us again.

Chinese laborers built this crazy railway. They say that one Chinese died for every sleeper laid, and one white engineer for every kilometer of track. Fever and lions carried them off.

By
GEORGES
SURDEZ

Not IN THE RITUAL

A Story of the Foreign Legion

THE ORCHESTRA had concluded selections from "The Chimes of Normandy"; the last notes still vibrated in the warmth of the spring night. A tepid breath from the nearby sea stirred and rustled the long, droopy leaves of the palm trees edging the main public square of Oran, across the street, where the Sidi-Brahim shaft slashed a long shadow across the pool of whitened cement. On the café's terrace, through the crackling of applause, rose the clicking of glasses, the hum of conversation, the voices of the waiters darting to collect orders.

"One Byhr-Cassis—one beer—two Dubonets . . ."

"One special—two coffees—one chocolate ice . . ."

The light colors of the women's dresses, the blues and scarlets of military uniforms, livened the drab mass of the civilians clustered around the iron tables. After one hundred years of French occupation, the contrast of races still amazed. Yet equally at home were the young lieutenant of cavalry, the white cloaked Arab *kaid*, the sleek, pouchy, clean shaven grandson of a *mellah* woman.

The violinist, a dapper, dark Spaniard from Valencia, bowed, glanced at his musicians, lifted his bow. Newcomers hastened to their chairs. Two men sat down some distance from the table I occupied with my comrade, Markes, separated from us by several groups. The tall young captain was Farral. Once seen, there could be no mistaking his strong, graceful silhouette. I knew his companion also, Sub-Lieutenant Bruckner, a Prussian by birth, but in the Foreign Legion since 1910. Farral gave an order

to the waiter, settled back to listen to "*Les Millions d'Arlequin*," a cigaret between his lips. Bruckner closed his eyes; his heavily fleshed, tanned, mustached face was solemn.

His attitude, his evident enjoyment, amused me. String music does reach deeper into one's being on hot North African nights, but Bruckner sensitive to the strains of a violin struck me as ludicrous. I had been in Algeria four months, had come especially to see the reformed Legion—I had last beheld it when in the turmoil of reconstruction after the terrific losses of the World War—and had consequently met many officers. I had been greeted courteously, if with varying degrees of warmth, by all save Bruckner.

On our first meeting in Sidi-bel-Abbes, he had made his attitude clear: He knew what had been written, what had already been published on the Corps in America and England. He said that while others might permit themselves to be deceived by my frank approach, he was not at all taken in. Contrasted with the intelligent understanding of others, his stubborn distrust had been offensive. His glare made me uneasy, and I did not deem him very clever. His presence here tonight, with Farral, who appeared of an entirely different mold racially, morally and physically, puzzled me.

"You have met Farral, haven't you?" Markes asked me.

He had been in the Legion twelve years—ten as a sergeant—and had been discharged because of severe wounds. He had appointed himself my guide in Legion matters, and had no drawbacks—save, perhaps, that he proselyted for the mixing of grenadine in beer, which makes a nasty mess for an untrained palate.

"I met him down south, yes—"

"The desert is *up* from Oran, not *down*," he corrected me. "Got along well with him? Fine. Now, if you wish to hear tales of the Legion, go to him. He's smart and he'll know what you're after, but he is obliging and polite."

"He'll look me up tomorrow, probably. He said he would."

"No doubt. But why not speak to him tonight?"

"He has not seen me and I do not wish to bother him—you understand?"

"Because I am with you? It's all right; I'm not sensitive. You can drop me."

Markes could not get it through his head that it would be quite proper for him to sit with officers, as a civilian. The habit of twelve years was hard to dismiss. When his former chiefs stopped him on the street, to shake his hand, he felt no humility. And he knew perfectly well that I did not mind his presence in the least—he was afraid to follow me across the crowded terrace to speak to a captain, that was all.

"I spoke to Farral about you," I retorted, "and he recalls you quite well. Said to fix up an evening together during his stay here. You were with him in the Middle Atlas, weren't you? So you see that's not what stops me—" I hesitated, aware in advance that it was unwise to voice criticism of a Legionnaire to Markes. "To tell you the truth, it's Bruckner. He doesn't like me, and I don't like him."

"How do you know he doesn't?"

"Took care that I heard about it. 'Journalists, writers, all garbage from the same refuse can. He'll come and snoop a week or so, go home and lie about us for money.' "

"Must be your fault; he's a good guy."

"Looks like a brute to me."

"What d'you mean, a brute?"

"A man incapable of a fine feeling. I admit he is a fine soldier, and I'll grant that he didn't buy that hardware on his chest. But he looks like the materialization of all the rotten noncoms of the Legion you read about in books. The kind of a bird who'd kick a fainting trooper to make him get up."

Markes looked at me with growing pity.

"You're dumb—and if you do get money for anything you think of in America, it truly is a wonderful country! You don't know a man when you see one. Let me tell you a story . . ."

THIS yarn [Markes started] can't be told as I gathered it. Understand right now that I was not a witness to all of the events that happened. But I shall not bother telling you each time where and when I got details. You should know by this time how things become known in the Legion. An orderly tells the cook, the cook tells the mess sergeant, who carries it on. A fellow comes back from somewhere and tells you: 'This is what occured here, and there; what I heard, what I saw.' To end with, you can piece together a pretty complete story. See?

You're going to grin at first, and pat yourself on the back as a good judge of men, for it will look as if you were right. But remember that there are two sides to any wall, and many more sides to any man. Bruckner is a gentleman, if ever there lived one. Does not show often, but when it shows—well, that's what I'm going to talk about.

Guess you start a yarn with how the man looks, what he is. Here's what I know about Bruckner: He is a Prussian, a year or so under forty, and has been in the Legion quite a space. He was pretty young when he came into it, and possibly had good reasons to change climates. I have an idea what that was, but that's for him to tell you some day. He picked up French quickly, was not long a private, and was with the first column into southern Morocco. He has seventeen citations to his credit, any of which you would frame and hang on your wall, if you could claim it.

He is a sub-lieutenant now, but when what I'm relating happened, he was sergeant-chief with the Instruction Company at Sidi-bel-Abbes. The recruits at that time were numerous, German boys in plenty, but many, many Russians. The Ruskies came down like locusts, in ragged uniforms, a riding boot on one leg, a carpet slipper on the other foot, and showed epaulettes and tin crosses wrapped in old paper.

The new Madsen automatic rifle—that's since been replaced by the '24 model—had just been issued, and it was Bruckner's job to teach the new guys how it worked. He'd take them beyond the barracks, on the drill field between the ramparts and the Spahis stables, and lecture them. Many of the lads knew no French, and owing to the Russians, Bruckner could not speak German to make himself clear. He has an accent in French, you've noticed, and when he tries to talk slowly and simply it gets thicker and thicker.

One afternoon he was in the middle of a complicated explanation when he looked up from the tarpaulin on which he had lined the pieces of an automatic. He saw, or believed he saw, one of the recruits grinning. That made him sore, because he knew there was something to be amused at.

"Laughing at me?" he asked.

"No, Sergeant."

"Deny laughing?"

"No, Sergeant."

"Think you could do better?"

Bruckner then got quite a start. The fellow stepped forward. He was tall, dark, slender, and looked like a man with good blood back of him. The sergeant saw he was no Russian. But what knocked him flat was the guy's answer.

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Go ahead—show us."

The private squatted and assembled the gun, quicker than Bruckner could have managed. His fingers flew, he seemed to know what to do every second. He straightened, saluted.

"Ready, Sergeant."

Bruckner could not believe it. He tried the weapon, and it worked very well. He gaped a bit. Then he saw that the others were enjoying his surprise and annoyance, and got very hot under the collar.

"Not the first time you do it, eh?"

"No, Sergeant."

"If you know how to work this new gun, I know what you were. And I know what you must be now—"

"My private affair, Sergeant."

"You have nothing to be smart about. Your name?"

"Verdier, Jacques, matricular number 11657, Sergeant."

"Well, Verdier, here's two days' clink at the end of your nose. If you pipe back, they'll breed like guinea pigs."

You must remember that it was pretty hot and dusty and that Bruckner, despite the three V stripes on his sleeves, was human and thirsty as any man there.

"All right, Sergeant," Verdier said with a smile.

He served his two days without trying to have them lifted, which he could have done, as Bruckner is no liar and would have admitted the truth. In fact, Verdier was so cheerful about it that the sergeant grew sorer than ever, and tipped off the other noncoms that there was a "smart one" among the recruits.

No matter how well a man may dress to go out, a good noncom can always find something wrong with his rig. And you know how it goes: You're not told what is the matter; you're just turned back at the gate, told to 'get yourself dressed properly'. You go back to your room, look your outfit all over, polish the heel of your left boot which *might* look a little less black than the toe, and try again. You're sent back, and you change shirt and necktie. A third time and you tighten all your buttons. Then, when it's too late to leave, the charitable soul informs you that the leather lining of your *képi* shows a millimeter in the back.

Jacques Verdier was treated to that comedy every time he tried to go out. He would grow white, and his lips would become just a faint, pinkish line across his face; but he preserved outward calm. He knew who had started the trouble, and sometimes you would catch him looking hard at Bruckner.

"Still smiling, Verdier?" the sergeant asked from time to time.

"Still smiling, Sergeant," Verdier would reply. And he *would* smile.

IT BECAME a game among the noncoms. They were not bad fellows, but life was dull and it gave them something to watch. All these vexations seem like nothing to one who is free to come and go as he likes, but imagine what they mean to a Legionnaire, who has precious few liberties in any case.

What made it harder for Verdier was that he had to watch himself constantly—for a look, a word, or a gesture. He had been a soldier before, knew the military code, and the price to be paid for reacting to temper. There were days when Bruckner kidded him, and he almost dug his fingers into the walnut stock of his rifle. The worst of it was that everything was done perfectly according to rules; Bruckner's observations were within his duty.

"Still smiling, Verdier?"

"Still smiling, Sergeant."

Men wondered which of the two would break first. I am telling you that the silent feud told no less on the sergeant than on the private. Those who knew pitied Bruckner. His reputation was at stake; he had to break the other's will—and he felt foolish, helpless before Verdier's steely strength of mind. He wanted to give in, to let up, and could not—not without admitting that the private was the gamer. At times, when he asked his usual question, you would have sworn that it was he who was persecuted, who craved relief. He almost begged Verdier to give in, with his eyes.

One day he applied for transfer, for active service. All felt that his rivalry with Verdier was at the bottom of his application to get away.

He cursed for twenty minutes when he saw Jacques Verdier's name listed under his own as a member of the replacement draft for Tazza, in the Second Regiment. Bruckner was to be in charge, as no officer was scheduled to go. When his men lined up, he talked to them in a queer way. And all knew he was addressing one man only—Verdier.

"I'll have a chance to see how well I have trained you men. For many will probably remain under my orders out there. Let me inform you right now that easy and mild as Sergeant Bruckner may be in barracks, he is strict in the field. You see those medals? If you want some like them, follow where I lead. I am

aware that I am not popular with all of you, so let me say in advance that if there is one who is saving a bullet for Bruckner, he shall have his chance. Nothing braces me so much when facing fire as to have somebody behind who wants my life. The danger in the rear balances the danger in front—and, death for death, slob for slob, what do I care who drops me?"

Every one looked at Verdier, who smiled.

Had he not been such a fine, handsome man, his smile would have been endurable. But an expression of sarcastic disdain, of conscious superiority, on that good looking face, from that tall, really powerful man, dug deep into a man's ego. He felt superior, was superior. Looking steadily at Bruckner, he shook his head slowly—twice—and his smile widened.

There was no time to say more, for the band started to play. Though the detachment was small, the colonel, a stickler for tradition, insisted on the whole business—music and flag to the station, and the "Legion's March" pounded out as the train started away. You know how it feels, even to an outsider—impressive-like, and your throat contracting so you couldn't swallow a grape seed.

The detachment joined a battalion of the Second Regiment south of Tazza, near the Jebel Tafrat. That battalion formed part of a mobile group three thousand strong, breaking its teeth on the Bahalam and Marmusha tribes. The enemy warriors were black skinned, bearded, and when they came at you in earnest they were nothing but bundles of muscles sprouting steel blades. Their women and kids followed their rushes, to take care of our wounded and hoot at the cowards who retreated. I have had some of them drop only when on top of my machine gun, riddled like sieves, and dead the last ten yards.

There was fighting—and Bruckner soon had another reason to dislike Verdier. The private turned out to be a madman in action. For five columns past Bruckner had been the first man to win a citation. Verdier nosed him out, and almost made the Military Medal the very first time. He was so crazy, yet so calm, that we who had seen the symptoms before knew what ailed him; he was trying to get killed off quickly. There was something dark and heavy resting on his mind, and all that preliminary training had meant nothing to him. Fighting was what he had come to do in the Foreign Legion; death what he had hoped to find.

We had Old Man Choubel for a captain, who had more scars on his body than teeth left in his gums. He took a liking to Verdier at once, for he loved fine fighting men. Once, the private was the sole survivor of a group of eight caught in some ambush. He continued firing, and when his foes retreated—I am not exaggerating; it's down in black and white—he calmly fixed bayonet and pursued, a one man counter-attack.

When he returned he was a sight, with only his pants left whole, his *képi* gone, his chest and arms covered with blood and bits of beef hanging from his sticker. The native troopers came from their lines to look at him. Choubel nominated him corporal then and there, and swore loudly that he'd get him the Medal.

TO TELL you all he did would take a week. You wouldn't believe nine-tenths of it, anyway. Others have tried to understand why a man who wants to die usually kills off four guys who want to live. Seems to be a fact, though. During all this, Bruckner was losing weight. He had managed to get himself a citation that would have pleased any ordinary sergeant, but he was a pale shadow beside Verdier. I think he thought the guy was doing all that to spite him.

The worse of it, from Bruckner's side, he was almost powerless. Choubel was proud of Verdier—he was as vain of his company as a middle aged matron of her milky skin—and a man who got cited after every show was an asset. Any captain likes to get hold of a fighting nut—what the reports name "the legendary Legionnaire."

"Verdier," he addressed the new corporal one day, before the whole company, "you're an intelligent man, and I grant you have courage. I shall recommend you for special school, and you shall be commissioned in six months."

"I beg you not to, Captain," Verdier replied.

His lips were tight, and I am saying that I saw sweat drip into his eyebrows—I was present at the time—and for a man who was never afraid, he acted oddly.

"Serious reasons?" Choubel asked.

"Serious, Captain."

Choubel nodded. He knew what that meant, as we all knew. To obtain a commission in the Foreign Legion a man must show papers, give his real name, reveal his past. There is no escaping that. The man is allowed to serve under the name he picked out, but his chiefs must know all about him. Minor sins are glossed over casually, so "serious reasons" meant precisely what it said.

"That's all, Corporal," Choubel finished, and walked away after shaking hands.

Bruckner looked at Verdier and grinned. For the first time the man did not smile in answer. His hands closed hard and we thought there would be trouble immediately. But we did not yet know how strong he was. He calmed down in three seconds, shrugged.

"If I live to be sergeant, Sergeant—"

"If you do?"

"I'll settle then, Sergeant."

You would not think that Bruckner could blush. But he was so pleased that his cheeks faded from brick to white, to turn a delicate pink, just like a soft light under a rose silk shade. Understand—this was the first time he could be *sure* that Verdier felt badly inside.

What puzzles me is that from that day Bruckner rather liked Verdier. And call me a fool if Verdier was far from liking the sergeant. Emotions run in a circle—something like light where the last color runs into the first. That explains how hatred can be so close to friendship.

We saw something of that revealed on another occasion. Bruckner was temporary *adjudant*, and he took his section to support my machine gun group. The combat was already well under way; our patrols had pushed up against the outposts of the tribesmen; rifles were popping.

With a map, I could show you what happened. I fear you can not understand. But here goes: A bunch of Marmushas slashed through our front, curled up around the place where we had been posted, almost surrounded us. We had nothing to worry about as long as we remained stationed in the shallow trench we had dug—but it was risky business to stand up. But we soon found out that we were not the game they sought, anyway, for they threw out a skirmish line to screen us, while the bulk made for a ridge six hundred yards ahead.

Those natives never attend school. But they know what to do and when to do it. That ridge commanded a trail through the hills, along which the supply *échelon* of the machine gun sections and trench mortar group had to pass. From there they could open fire at one hundred and fifty meters range, and cut the poor beggars to pieces in two minutes.

Bruckner has a lot of fighting sense. He saw what the *échelon* would get when it arrived, unless warned. At the same time that he turned to speak, Corporal Verdier approached and saluted.

"A suggestion, Sergeant?"

"Speak."

"The plane has landed. We can not signal—a man would be picked off before he got the message through from the crest, and our officers can not see through half a kilometer of earth—"

"To the point, Corporal."

"I request your permission to reach the captain."

"Refused!" Bruckner smiled affably. "He would never forgive me if you were harmed. Aside from that, the suggestion is excellent." He knelt and called for a volunteer; indicated the nearest man, "All right, my lad—" and he outlined the situation on a page torn from a worn notebook.

THE MAN took a deep breath and was off. Nice young fellow, a bit conceited. Could do the hundred in twelve seconds, as a rule. But he never fairly started. Five yards away he appeared to lose his balance, reeled and pitched nose first into the dirt. There was no use risking any one to bring him in; no further harm could come to him.

"Let me go," Verdier urged.

"No. You're a hog for distinction. Be patient."

Bruckner tore out another page, scribbled. He looked around. There were still plenty willing to go. Even a hardened man like the sergeant found it annoying to select from all those good guys the one who would not live thirty seconds longer.

"You—"

It was the turn of a baldish chap who I remember only as Rat Mug. He was cited posthumously, and you can dig up his name. A good, average soldier, with four years of service, no achievement to his credit, and a gnawing longing to become first class private. He took the note, saluted, bounded into the open.

The first bullet struck him as soon as he emerged. The majority of the natives were armed with old Chassepots, which fire a slug as big as the knuckle of your thumb. Caught him in the shoulder, spun him right around, but he didn't fall. Instead of dropping back with us, he started out gamely.

Hope you never see anything like it—they just could not kill him off! A second shot knocked him down, and he rose, staggering like a drunken man, forward. They hit him a third and a fourth time, and he looked all gone. But he propped himself on hands and knees, shook his head as if dizzy.

"Lie down," Bruckner yelled. "Lie down, you ass! We'll get you later—you can't make it!"

Everybody started to scream like a gang of women.

"Lie down, Rat Mug! Lie down! . . ."

For it was obvious that even if he were left alone he could not make the distance. Had lost too much blood. But the idiot pulled himself erect, literally climbed from the ground and shambled onward. You wanted to cry and you wanted to laugh, and you ended by doing both at one time. The corporals had some sense of responsibility left; they were yelling and giving the butt to the half hysterical fellows who wanted to go out and help Rat Mug.

When they did get him, they did a good job. Half of his head must have come off with his *képi*.

Two lives gone; and Bruckner, to justify losing those two, had to risk others. He was sort of hesitant, now, looking about, and hating to give the word.

"Let's get it over with," Verdier snapped. "I'll go, and I don't need your little note. I know what is going on as well as you do, Bruckner."

"I'd like to save you until you're sergeant," Bruckner said. "I'm curious to know what you plan."

"I'll go, I'll live—then I'll beat you half to death," Verdier said, standing in full sight, with the bullets nosing around for his hide. He spread his arms wide, laughed loudly. "See, they can't kill me—they can't kill me! Nobody can kill me! I'm varnished with luck paint!"

Bruckner was a picture at that moment. You could tell that he did not know what to do, that he was afraid Verdier would be killed. And there was admiration in his face, understanding. That sort of stuff was what he liked to show when he had an excuse for showing it. He nodded permission, half extended his hand.

Verdier murmured a word of thanks for the consent. His hand twitched, then both smiled. Their fingers did not touch.

A split second later Verdier was out.

He dodged among the boulders and the bushes. You go to the cinematograph and to boxing bouts for the excitement. At that rate, what would you have paid for a place with us? There was one lone man with two hundred fellows, who had

done nothing all their lives save sight rifles, popping at him.

You could see dirt spurt between his feet, lead splash on stones. Twice he dropped and rolled over and over, his arms thrashing loosely. The Marmushas yelled, and we grunted and groaned; while Bruckner, kneeling in full view on the parapet, twisting his big hands like a little lady—he was absolutely safe, no one was looking at him—swore or prayed, I am not sure which.

Each time Verdier got up, his black hair glinting like a metal helmet under the sun, and raced on stronger than ever. We must have pushed him forward with our shouts! He vanished suddenly and the firing dwindled—and we looked at each other and laughed. Bruckner was holding his forehead in one hand, snapping the fingers of the other, muttering to himself. He came down quickly enough when the natives recovered from the excitement and saw him there, with his stern to their foresights.

THE COLONEL commanding the mobile group called Verdier to his tent that night. The orderly claimed that they drank red wine in tin cups at the same table, that Verdier appeared perfectly at ease. We said nothing to him when he came back. We were all a little sore at him for getting us so excited that morning.

Meanwhile, his citation for the Medal had been approved of in Rabat, and the official confirmation arrived. So there was a *prise d'armes* in the camp two days later, and he stood in line to receive the yellow and green ribbon. The band played the "*Marseillaise*", a lot of swords flashed, while the younger officers took snapshots.

The operations ended soon after. Somebody had found out that we were up against too much for an outfit our size, the rains were coming, and one thing and another. Our battalion went to rest in Oudjda, where Verdier was officially notified of his promotion to sergeant. He had been in the Legion nine short months, and there he was with five citations to his credit, the yellow and green ribbon, and a full fledged sergeant! But he seemed sort of disgruntled—sorry he was alive.

Quite how the fight with Buckner was fixed up, I can not tell you. I had to go to Fez and testify in a trial over tinned meats and casks of wine that turned out to hold water. In my whole military career that's the one thing I regret missing—that fight.

Bruckner and Verdier both obtained a week's leave, and some of their friends as well. Three-fourths of the noncoms in the battalion got leave—which is unusual. Probably, the officers knew what was scheduled and did not want to interfere with something good. Bad blood between noncoms had best be worked out in open fighting, they reasoned. The fight took place in a barn, in Algeria. A good friend told me about it.

Verdier seemed slender merely because he was tall. I was informed that he was muscled just like a feline—you know, all the different sets standing out separately, covered with fine, pink, satiny skin. And he evidently knew much about boxing, although that did not count for so much, as you'll see.

You know Bruckner; looks solid enough now, doesn't he? He was six or seven years younger. He never had drunk much. When he stripped, he looked as if he had been carved from white marble below the tan on his neck. He was by far the heavier in build, his chest almost as deep as it was wide— Look at him! An ordinary, well setup man he could break between his hands.

You have seen Legionnaires scrap once or twice. You know that everything comes into play, which is natural in men who don't fight for sport or amusement, but to preserve their hides. Verdier had some difficulty getting to that, you know, having a different code, and at first he tried to make bare fists go. But after being hurt once or twice, he learned better.

They pounded at each other, like sledges on anvils, and wrestled for minutes on end, each striving to keep the

other's fists, elbows, knees from striking vital spots. Bruckner swung his clenched hands like rocks from a sling, and whenever he hit right, Verdier would be slammed to the floor—to writhe aside, clasp Bruckner's knees and bring him down.

They fought on a plank flooring, and I was told that when the two rose you could see the wood darkened by the stains of sweat and blood.

Both were bleeding from nose and mouth before long, and Bruckner's cheeks were shifting colors around his squinted eyes. Seeking for better holds, their nails tore flesh. Round and round they went, smashing and clawing. Bruckner invented a system that worked well for a time: He would brace his feet solidly, shove, and follow up this advantage until he had Verdier against a wall. Then he battered at him with both hands and his head.

When they separated for a breathing spell they would stare at each other and laugh.

The finish came abruptly.

Bruckner had pulled free, swung one arm far back as if to launch one of his fierce punches. Instead, he sharply lowered his head and bounded forward like a ram.

Verdier was caught off guard, had not expected the onslaught. Fortunately for him, he was lightning fast on his feet, and the formidable impact struck neither stomach nor chest. His body twisted aside and he took the shock on his hip. Nevertheless, he was hurled across the floor and dropped with a heavy crash.

Bruckner was on him like a wild beast—to be met by one of his own tricks.

Verdier had rolled on his back, drawn up his legs until the knees almost touched his chin. Supported by his shoulders and elbows he struck out with both feet. Nothing human could withstand such a smash and remain upright. Bruckner staggered back, gasped. Then his knees folded like hinges under his weight; he crumpled to the floor.

There was an ambulance corps sergeant there who worked on him at once. Verdier was not pretty himself, but he was strong enough to kneel by and be aware of what was going on. They say he cried a little. But he did not need to fret. Such men as Bruckner are too strong to be hurt severely by anything save steel or lead.

He awoke soon, looked at Verdier out of his one good eye.

"Something rotten about you," he stated thoughtfully. "It isn't your guts, and it isn't your fighting. I know that much."

"Friends?" Verdier asked eagerly.

"No. I'll get your goat yet."

How he did, I'll get to soon.

BOTH of them were sent back to Algeria soon after—Bruckner to Bel-Abbes, to resume his old job of training recruits. Verdier, they claimed, had been sent to Oran, no one could say exactly why. I had no time to find out because the battalion was sent into some piffling little mess, in which I was stupid enough to get hurt. The bullet hit me near the elbow, and after three days in Taza, I was sent to Oran, where they had a special bone doctor.

This is a nice town, and it was then. A broken elbow is not a great handicap. Once a day I reported for dressing and examination at the hospital, and the rest of the time was mine. Naturally, I called at the Legion depot to ask for Verdier.

What a fine story I heard! That explained why he wanted to die. Verdier was in the Civilian Prison, pending his being sent to France for trial. I looked up the case in the papers.

He was accused of killing a woman—some sort of music hall singer. He came of an old military family. His father was a retired colonel, and he had graduated from military school and been a lieutenant. He met the young woman and wanted to marry her against everybody's advice. She was not good enough for him or most any other man—but he was crazy in love with her, said she was

slandered and misjudged. But he found out different . . .

The lieutenant had then sent in his resignation, written to his father, vanished. The next morning the woman had been found dead—shot. The lieutenant had been recognized on a photo showing a *prise d'armes* in the Taza sector.

I tried to see Verdier at the prison. Somehow, I could not see where he had done wrong. There are things a woman can do to you that sting too deep for forgiveness. You can't just laugh and forget it.

They would not let me see Verdier at the jail. They had heard about his resources and courage while in the Legion, and were afraid he would escape. So they suspected all Legionnaires of being apt to help him split the air and vanish once more. Which shows that they were intelligent jailers after all.

Here's how I came to see the rest of the affair: You recall that *adjudant* who died in Saida, and turned out to have a big title, a big family and a lot of money? His people asked for his body. The authorities could do no less than the correct thing by his remains. Bruckner had gone up one notch, and was *adjudant*. He brought forty men from Bel-Abbes—in full parade uniforms—all dolled up. And they escorted the caisson bearing the bier down the Rue des Jardins and so on to the dock. There, the bugler blew, and the sailors hoisted the coffin aboard, while strong men bowed their heads and the section stood at present arms. You know, one of the usual ceremonies.

One of the nurses wanted to see the show. She was great on dead men and live cats, though sick or wounded men got treated rough, unless they weren't too sick. See what I mean? I escorted her down to the port, my arm in a silk sling, and we watched, admiringly. I decided to blow her to a trolley ride on the way back, for it's a long climb. But the trolley car did not move fast. It had caught up with the detachment, and the motorman and conductor were yelling at Bruckner to move his men off the tracks, and Bruckner was sore and ordered his men to march where they were. He was finely set up, and his face was all healed by that time. He had shiny gold buttons, green epaulettes, all his medals and—I am not lying—a sword! Full parade kit, and he was an *adjudant*, remember.

The men were perspiring and stiff in their sashes and beltings. I heard them say that the next guy too good to be buried in Algeria should go and croak at home. Bruckner walked along mincingly, peeping at the angry motorman out of the corner of his eye.

We had reached the Prefecture Building when it happened.

Probably, they had taken Verdier there to fill out the final papers before he was taken to the dock to board the steamer for Marseilles. He came out of the side door, and I knew him at once, although he had no uniform, save the coarse, grayish clothing they had issued him in prison. His hair was cropped close to his skull, and he shambled between two big *gendarmes*—the kind that seem about to burst their riding pants.

There was a small mob of civilians to watch him go—lousy dock workers, hybrid Spaniards, Arab urchins from the streets above the hospital and tough kids from the Rue des Gênes. All yelled at him, and he looked mighty hard hit, sheepish. He hunched up his shoulders to hide his face the best he could.

I went cold with rage when I saw what they had done to him, and was on the verge of getting off and making a kick. They had put handcuffs on him to march him through town! Two big guys with pistols, and handcuffs on an unarmed man! But my temper cooled when I noted that Verdier had seen the Legion.

He had had a mighty tough time with us, but he had grown to feel one of us. He tried to straighten up, but that's hard when your wrists are in irons. His lips tightened in the old way, his eyes blazed. Some pride came back to him, I guess, when he thought of what he had accomplished. I wished the trolley would hurry and get me away from there. I

did not like to watch the meeting between Verdier and Bruckner, after all that had happened, and I could not help thinking that no matter what crime a man may be guilty of, some things should atone—and the stunts Verdier had pulled in Morocco were among them.

I swore at the conductor, but he waved his hand to show me why the trolley could not proceed even at a creep. I saw the Legionnaires drawn up in two lines, right on the tracks, rifles grounded. Bruckner was in front of them, stiffer than ever, his face scarlet.

His sword rasped from the scabbard.

"Present—arms!"

His defiant shout filled the street, echoed against the walls. The *gendarmes* started as if they had been jabbed with needles. Forty rifles left the ground with one single creak of straps, forty bayonets glistened high, flaming tapers under the ardent sun. The men froze, heels together, chins high, saluting a worthy Legionnaire.

As Verdier marched past him Bruckner brought up his blade in salute, dropped it with a fuller, wider sweep than you have ever seen.

The prisoner tried to bring his poor, manacled hands in a careless gesture of farewell, but never finished the move. He tried to smile, but his eyes melted, his face went to pieces, tears came. Oh, Bruckner had broken him up that time, achieved what he had sought in vain with tormenting, irony, and fists. But it was a victory he had not planned. Simply, with the perfect and unreasoning candor of his warrior's code, Bruckner had done what he believed just. He had offered to the murderer, the outcast, to the man who was also the superb Legionnaire, the highest homage of forty of his kind, his comrades, his brothers.

Verdier was gone.

There remained in the middle of the avenue a section of Legion at present arms, and a raging, bellowing *adjudant* who flourished a naked sword in his big fist.

"A man like that—the pigs, the swine!"

MARKES motioned to the waiter to add more grenadine to his tall glass of beer, and I took my eyes from Bruckner reluctantly. The man appeared magnified, hallowed by his sublime gesture.

"I'm not much of a judge," I admitted.

"Nobody does judge us rightly—we are different."

In the tone used by Markes there was little modesty. The glow of his twelve years' share in the endless epic of the Foreign Regiments was strong on him.

"What happened then?" I urged.

"Nothing. Bruckner probably was told off by the colonel, who, in his own mind, undoubtedly approved him. As you see, he is a sub-lieutenant now, pretty rough on recruits, but they all get to know him and would fight for him in a showdown. Just his way, you have to understand."

"I mean—did you hear what became of Verdier?"

"Him? When he was tried, his lawyer evoked the principle that modern justice seeks to prevent rather than punish or avenge. He pointed out that his client had already resigned from his regiment, that his resignation was on the colonel's desk. He had sacrificed family and army for the woman. When he learned that she was false, he had come straight from duty, carried his service revolver as regulations willed. There was no premeditation; he fired as a drowning man clutches at a plank when she laughed at him for a fool, to stop her talking, her jeers. The jury had to admit that it was not likely he would do the same thing over again. He was acquitted."

"And then?"

"Then what?"

"Even though he had been an officer," I insisted, "he had resigned and contracted a five years' enlistment in the Legion. He had served less than a year. How was that fixed up? Did he go back to his regiment as an officer or—"

But Markes was not listening. Look-

ing over my head, he had risen, and his hand sketched a salute before he recalled that he was a civilian—only a civilian. I shook hands with Farral.

"Say, both of you join us, eh?" he addressed Markes. "Long since we were with the old gang in the Second. Bruckner wants to see you." Then he turned to me. "Better come over and speak your piece. Bruckner was growing angry because you stared at him, and I reasoned with him. Has the wrong idea of you altogether—unless you *are* mixed up in a press campaign against the Legion." He ended with a laugh.

"Neither for nor against—impartial observer."

"Liar," Farral said calmly. "If you weren't so lazy, you would enlist. But Bruckner is a man you should know in your business. Likes to talk, and has lots to talk about."

"Must have. Say, if you were in the Middle Atlas together, you and Markes, you must have known Verdier?"

I was instantly aware that I had spoken rashly. Farral had stopped short, to look at Markes who seemed rather uneasy. Then Farral smiled.

"Of course, he *would* tell you. Come along!"

So Farral was Verdier, Verdier was Farral! True, allowing for seven years, a change in uniforms, the silhouettes matched with exceeding precision. Acquiring stripes, Farral had not lost courage. And it explained the military medal ribbon on a man I knew came from military school. For the rest, I needed no jury's verdict to guide my esteem.

Then for a space, I could think of nothing save that I was shaking hands with Bruckner—whose doubts had melted when Farral had greeted me. I was pressing the hand that had held a sword and saluted—a man.

ARMORER'S SONG

By HELEN VON KOLNITZ HYER

Smite the ringing anvil; forge the tempered blade;
Beat the battle dents from mail, linked row on row;
Point the lance, and tip the shaft, and string the great crossbow;
For Richard Cœur de Lion is going on Crusade!

Seljukes hold the Sepulcher with magic scimitars,
English bowmen's bones will feel the simoon's bleaching breath.
The Black Assassin's hosts will soon keep bloody tryst with death
For Richard Cœur de Lion is going to the wars!

Pleasant are the lays of love to make the senses reel;
But a man's heart leaps to the wilder song of wind on whirling steel.
And it takes the two edged keenness of a Christian English sword
To fill the heathen Paynims with the glory of the Lord!

So burnish up your helmet; and buss your buxom maid;
For Richard Cœur de Lion is going on Crusade!

Of the World War in Air

A NOVELETTE

BY ANDREW A. CAFFREY

CAPTAIN JACK STRINGFELLOW was in charge of combat school at Field 8, Issoudun. If you are in the habit of measuring your men by feet and inches, this man Stringfellow would fill the bill; for he was slightly taller than six feet four, bedside and barefooted. Then again, if you are one to size up your men according to ability—flying ability, in this case—well, Jack Stringfellow would have made par, and far better, in your most exacting demands.

The captain was hell on wings. And over and above all this, no matter how you called for your men, Captain Jack wouldn't disappoint. Stringfellow was a sort of king in his little domain, back there on Field 8, during that part of '18 when Uncle Sam needed regular guys, and needed them bad. And it was such a small domain, Field 8. It was only a small corner of a great war, to carry a very weighty mission.

Tell you what, it was no joke for any school field, such as 8, to say when a young squirt was all set for service on the Front. Field 8, you know, was the last training stop before a student went eastward to stop the enemy or to stop a slug. And it was Stringfellow who must act as the final judge of this. His to say whether or not a Yank kid was fit to fly up there where even the best were none too good. Up there where none was good enough.

Of course a man in Captain Stringfellow's position could make a mistake. Sure; send 'em up as they come! What if they do get bumped West? You'll never even hear about it, Stringfellow. Issoudun and its Field 8 are deep in the S.O.S. And the actual bleeding Front is kilometers—hundreds of hellish kilometers—away.

You, Stringfellow, you can afford to take a chance. That is, with the other fellow's neck. And what's more, Stringfellow, you'll be an awful chump if you don't. Why should you tear your shirt, run round in small circles, and work up a sweat about the future welfare of the cocky flying squirts? Are the higher-ups, the high rankers, doing that over you? Not by a long shot! Yep, Stringfellow, you can pass the well known old Army buck. Pass it! Make 'em like it. This war ain't going to last forever. And you'll be a long time dead; so hop in that official car that's at your command, highball into Issoudun, and join the happy outside drinkers at the curb—even if you have to crowd some of the Welfare workers into the gutter. That's the old stuff for soldiers!

Now there was your loud cry of '17 and '18. She was a very happy *guerre* if you saw fit to make her that way. And who didn't?

Captain Jack Stringfellow, for one, didn't.

No. It's a fact; the big guy took his job to heart. Yes, sir, he handled that thankless Field 8 position with the unswerving, mansize servitude of an old family slave. All the time, those nearest to him knew that he'd sooner have been on common squadron duty anywhere.

But headquarters had picked him for this berth; and that same headquarters—or any headquarters—was a hard master. Headquarters is, has to be, like a corporation—heartless. It says *do this*. And the good soldier does that. And never

Under the Pin

can the good soldier—commissioned man or enlisted stiff—ask why or when. Nor can he say *but* or *if*. Anyway, this man Stringfellow, though a product of April '17, was an A-1 man at arms. Which last crack is funny, if it wasn't so darned sad, for that Field 8 job kept him away from arms. It was his maker and breaker.

Captain Stringfellow had two other combat instructors working with him at 8. Notice it is written "with" him, and not "under" him; for nobody had to bow low to Captain Jack. Not even the raggedy tailed, newly arrived cadet. Nor the more or less despised second loots. And as for the hundreds of enlisted men on the post—you won't believe it—but it's a fact that they'd salute the man with pleasure. Yes, sir, that's a fact. And at 8 there were deep paths worn right around all the hangars, barracks, shops, etc., where the enlisted men had ducked in avoiding certain officers.

These two combat instructors who

worked with Stringfellow took on most of the preliminary combat work with the students. But in the end, before any student was *lached* from 8, Captain Stringfellow met that man in the air. Keeping up with his work, and meeting those scores and scores of passing pilots, was a tremendous piece of labor, too. And here was one place where Stringfellow might have passed that well known buck without fear of shirking. But that conscience of his! No, sir, he wouldn't let his co-workers take the burden of that great responsibility.

But look here. The idea herein is not to convey the thought that Stringfellow was one of those nice, old lady guys. Not at all. Far from that. In fact, to the cadets, he always sized up as a more or less hard guy. Something to be overcome. A guy that stood in the way.

These students upon whose merits, or demerits, Stringfellow must pass judgment, might be of any rank, from wild and cocky cadet to sedate and not-too-sure colonel. The finishing school caught them all.

NOW, a word about the cocky cadets who came to Field 8 all set to fly rings around these high powered, widely known combat instructors through whom Field 8 had grown famous. One of the first things a newly arrived cadet would do was to mosey out to the hangars, call a mac to one side, slip him a cigaret, and ask:

"How about this man Stringfellow? Is he as hot as we're led to believe? Which ship does Stringfellow hop? What number?"

All of the ships were numbered; and if a student, here or at another school, knew just who was flying any given number, well, it's a cinch he'd know who was who while on the wing.

"No number," the mac might see fit to advise the questioning newcomer. "Stringfellow used to fly a numbered ship, but all the students got wise to his boat, and nobody would stay in the same sky with that number, when it jumped them."

Cadet Rand, able kid with a cold blue eye, came into Field 8 late of a fine spring night, in '18. He had heard all about this top combater. Rand was a good pilot. And he wasn't dumb enough to think that Stringfellow was overestimated. However, Cadet Rand was out to make his rapid way through Field 8, for the Front was calling loudly for the boy. Yes, sir, that Front couldn't do without him much longer; and he couldn't live without the Front. Rand was one of those who went right out to the deadline, first thing in the A.M., and tried to learn all about the genus Stringfellow.

"I've got to meet him," he told a group of macs. "And when I do tangle antlers with this buck, well, I don't want to make any mistakes. Get what I mean? I can't afford to waste my best line of goods on anybody else."

"Feller," one of the macs told young Rand, "any of these here Field 8 combat instructors can absorb anything you might pour, so don't worry about putting out more than they can handle. Be generous, kaydet, and put out your very best, all the time; and your very best won't be quite as good as old Doctor Stringfellow orders for his helpers."

"Now don't get me wrong," Cadet Rand begged. "I don't mean to underrate the other combat men, but I know that Captain Stringfellow is the man who must be satisfied; and I want to know all there is to be known about him, if possible. When I meet him, I'll stay to go round and round with him. Then if I'm any part as good as I think I am, I'll get out of here. It'll be the front for me. Am I making myself clear?"

"You'll do," the macs agreed. "Roll out your blankets; you're hired, fed—and fired. Let's hope you're as good as you guess you are."

An hour or so after that, Cadet Rand was in the air aboard his first Field 8 ship. He spent the period chasing other students, diving at liberated balloons and strafing a ground silhouette. The observing officers, those who looked on from

the tower, observed and agreed that this kid in ship 315 wasn't bad at all. 315 was Rand.

That same day, later in the afternoon, Cadet Rand flew another period. On this hop he met Lieutenant Munroe, one of Captain Stringfellow's most able assistants. Rand went round and round with Munroe at three thousand feet. And he stayed with Munroe all the way down, as the combating planes lost altitude, till the combat instructor called off the dogfight at about three hundred feet. Three hundred feet is awful low for aerial combat work. Munroe cut the thing then because Munroe had once seen an ambitious student fight right into the ground —and right ahead into eternity. Munroe was a very fine combater.

After the combat, Cadet Rand made his way to where he found Lieutenant Munroe and a group of fellow officers talking, down near headquarters hangar. Cadet Rand waited till the lieutenant was at liberty before he butted in, then he asked questions, one after the other.

"What do you think of me, Lieutenant?" was his chief one.

"What ship were you in?" Lieutenant Munroe asked, for he had gone round and round with no fewer than ten students during the period just ended. "315, down south of Issoudun, eh? . . Let's see."

Lieutenant Munroe took out his note book.

"Yeh, I remember you now, Cadet. You're all right. You're good. But, by the way, I was on hand when you took off. It wasn't so good, Rand. And just now, when you landed, you landed rough as hell."

"But my air work," Cadet Rand insisted, "was O.K., Lieutenant, eh? You say it was good?"

"Fine," Lieutenant Munroe again told the cadet. "You're fast."

"Then why should we worry much about the takeoff and the landing, Lieutenant? You know, I'm going to fight the Boche in the air, not on the ground."

Going to fight the Boche in the air? Well, guess that's just about right. In the air, not on the ground. You can't beat that line of cold logic, can you? Yes, sir, that there sounded like common sense.

But Lieutenant Munroe looked far into the distant sky, over Cadet Rand's ambitious head, and laughed a bit. Not a belittling laugh, mind you, but a sort of reminiscent, good natured snicker.

"I've heard that before, Cadet," he told the new man at Field 8. "You men come here to perfect your aerial combat, that's true. And every time we say anything about poor ground work, to a man, he lets us know that he is going to fight the Boche up there where it's blue.

"But, Rand," Lieutenant Munroe continued, "as we see the thing, there are three important stages of successful flying. First, the takeoff. Next, good air work. Last, but by no means least, your ability to set a pursuit job down again. No one of the three is any good without the other two. Right you are: you are going to fight the enemy in the air; but you can't fight that enemy till you get a ship into the air. Every month, Rand, sees new and faster pursuit jobs arriving on the Front. The faster they come, the harder they are to handle on either end of the hop—the takeoff and the setdown. Now, for instance, take the Spad 220. She's a much harder bus to take off and land than are these Nieuports you're training on here. The same thing goes for Camels, Pups and some of the Italian *chasse* planes that are coming into use. Man, I tell you they're dynamite. Power! Power!

"Anyway, Rand, your air work is fine. See you later. Hope you'll like it here at 8. Also, I hope you have all kinds of quick luck and get out of 8 . . . Got a smoke? Thanks."

FOR two days more, flying two long periods each day, Cadet Rand battled with the finesse of his aerial combat work. Everybody, including the watching enlisted men and his fellow students, agreed that this cadet was there. Yes, he was one of that small group that is very

different. A born flyer, no doubt. And a good, willing flyer, all the time. He loved air. You could see that. Any one could. Field 8 wasn't going to hold him for long, now. Any hour, within the next few days, he'd be rolling his blankets again and pushing up toward the big doings. And when that day came, well, the Front should be the winner.

On his fourth day at Field 8 Cadet Rand was beginning to think that he had been there just a few days too long. Of course, being good, he was a bit hasty. That was entirely natural. But it seemed as though Captain Stringfellow, with that no-number ship of his, would never drop down from nowhere and jump Rand. Rand wanted to be jumped. He wanted to meet Stringfellow and have it over with once and for all. He was beginning to fear that maybe he'd reach that over-ripe stage that comes to any man who has been in top form for too long a stretch. Rand was good right now; and, maybe, he'd never be any better. There is such a thing as top condition; and, it's a cinch, you cannot go any higher than the top. So why didn't Stringfellow come along?

Well, that very same day, early in the afternoon, Stringfellow did come along. Not exactly that, however; for Rand had been watching the whole sky, and he never saw the captain come. Rand was at about eleven thousand feet, just cruising, and waiting for things to happen. And, as before said, while waiting, he was also watching for this ship with the blank sides.

And he had watched his sky. Up and down; east and west; before and behind. Rand always watched his sky, for the day must come, and soon, when the watching of his sky would most certainly mean life or death to him. And he wanted to live. So he watched his sky. But, getting some sort of hunch, Cadet Rand stopped watching his sky for half a second and looked back over his tail. Then and there his brave, young, royal American heart missed a flock of poorly timed shots. Captain Stringfellow was riding his tail. And Stringfellow's flashing, sun splashing propeller was so close to Rand's rudder that there was no joke about the thing. Not at all! There's nothing in air quite as bad as another ship with its hungry prop trying to hog quick bites out of your craft. Young Rand, telling about it later, was even willing to admit that he went cold all over, so close was the other ship to his. No kidding—that close stuff will call the best of them.

What's more, also according to Cadet Rand, this man on his tail looked directly ahead, and slightly down, but never cracked a smile. He just held his ship in that lethal position; putting the next move up to the cadet. The cadet, when physical control came back to his chilled body, received an order from General Disability. The old general said "Dive!" And Cadet Rand pulled the bottom from under himself and started down.

He knew that this would have to be a good dive. He'd been jumped by the best in air, and there was no second or better choice. No such thing as turning to go round and round. No such thing as zooming. No such thing as trying any sort of dumb horse play. As he saw it, and he made the right guess the first time, the dive was the correct answer. What was more to the point, Rand realized that this kingpin of acrobatic combat would dive right along behind him. But the thing the kid didn't know, couldn't guess, was how much of a dive a Nieuport 27 would stand. No time for that now, though. He was in his dive. One thousand feet of almost straight dive had quivered past—and Stringfellow's propeller was directly above and behind his rudder.

Soon, too soon, two thousand feet of his original eleven thousand feet of elevation had been dived away; and the old Nieuport was tight in every wire and surface. The kid took a quick peek out along the trailing edges of his upper wings; and those trailing edges had an up-curve like a bird's pinion feathers in flight. Also, the ailerons were both "washed" high above those trailing edges. Tell you what—and the cadet knew it, too—that

old bus was under strain. And would she stand up under that punishment? Well, a Spad, they said, would dive for five or six thousand feet and hang together, all in one piece. But a Spad was a Spad; and no other ship in wartime air would do what a Spad would do.

Rand thought of all this in those few falling seconds. Cadet Rand again recalled that he'd never heard anybody boasting about the manner in which a Nieuport 27 would dive. But—and this was hell!—all of a sudden he did recall that the Nieuport 28, which was the 27's big brother, would dive its linen off when put straight down for any long distance. And if the 28, a later and better type than the 27, would do its pilot dirt like that, what could he expect of this old 27?

Nearly three thousand feet had gone up and away from his tail. The frail crate in which he was boxed was simply a rattling, howling, whistling plummet that was hurtling, full motor, earthward. And, to give the old bus credit, it seemed to be widening the gap that divided Rand and the great Stringfellow.

Rand sensed this, at least. But the cadet was only human. And the cadet liked life. Also, and Rand would have been the first one to admit it, this cadet didn't want to die way back here in the deep S.O.S. No regular guy did. So there came a time and a place in that dive where young Rand made up his mind that he'd had enough. He turned with the idea of waving the captain away. Turned with the idea of admitting that the dive was a bit too hot for him; and this was a hard thing for a cocky cadet to do.

THEN Cadet Rand, turning, looked back into empty space. There was no ship on his tail. There was no ship high above him. He pulled out of his hard dive. He looked east and west, north and south; and there was no sign of a Stringfellow, any place.

The cadet flew in a wide circle, at about eight thousand feet, and made a thorough study of his sky. Then, thinking that the captain might have dived his wings off and plunged straight for earth, Cadet Rand knew a sickly feeling, and looked overside straight—straight down into Captain Stringfellow's face. That ship was just a few yards below the cadet's. Close!

Rand didn't know what to do. This was every bit as bad as when Stringfellow first arrived to sit there on his tail. One bad move now, and the cadet might mush his own ship right down atop the whirling prop of that lower Nieuport. Now how the devil, the greatly surprised cadet wondered, could any man dive faster than I was diving and get lower than my ship? If they make flyers like this Stringfellow—many of 'em—I'd best go back to driving a truck.

The cadet, trying to guess what a cadet should do under these unheard of conditions, flew straight ahead, paralyzed. Then, a little later, and just because a cocky cadet must not quit, he shot full gun to his motor and let the small bus climb. But of course, insofar as he could not dive to gather speed, the climb was to be a limited thing. Also, it was to be a climb that must not be overdone. He couldn't afford to put that Nieuport into a stall, not with Stringfellow so close. But Rand did climb; and the combat instructor climbed right along with him, keeping his ship just a few yards below the cadet. And Stringfellow was neither behind nor ahead of the cadet; but his ship was directly below, wing for wing, in such a manner as to give the cadet no way out.

Cadet Rand knew that he was seeing acrobatic combat at its very best. And the kid felt very much raw-john too. By now, though, his Nieuport 27 had put out all the climb it had. The small craft was just about set to "hang on its prop", and the next thing after a hanging on the prop must either be a forward dip and whip, or a sideslip. Or, as a last resort, a tail slip. But that other ship was directly below; and what was a cadet to do?

"Let Stringfellow watch out!" Cadet Rand thought. "Flying this 315 is my

job. It's up to him to look out for his own neck. Guess he can do it, too. What a bum he's making of me, though!"

And so thinking, Cadet Rand, at the top of his out-of-line-of-flight zoom, let his ship fall away in a left side slip. At the same time, wondering what the captain would be doing, he glanced overside to where Stringfellow's craft should have been uncovered, and flying in the clear. Ye gods of automatic flight, what was Stringfellow doing but sideslipping with the cadet, and still under him!

Cadet Rand felt like that traditional small boy sent out to do a man's job. That was hard to take, too. The cadet, as before said, had a pretty good opinion of his own ability as a pilot; and this Field 8 man, without half trying, was holding him helpless. Giving him never a chance. Making him feel like the rawest recruit that had ever cracked up a ship. What could he show if he never got a single chance to do his stuff? It was sure a rotten break. He had lived, hoped and prayed for this hour, and now that the time was at hand he couldn't use a single second of it. And everything was backward, too. Cuckoo!

Who ever heard of a man winning a combat by remaining under the other fellow? Ride his tail—that's the usual, accepted order of things. Get the altitude over your enemy and hold that altitude—there is your time honored formula for aerial success. But here was a man who relinquished altitude, threw it away, and rode a cadet ragged without any of the natural advantages. This was all wrong. It was all wrong in more ways than a few. And Cadet Rand, riding out of his slip, and again looking down at the other's ship, grew a bit madder. Fact is, he grew plenty mad; for this fly cadet had never before met anybody from whom he had to take seconds. Hell's fire, guy! He wouldn't take this, either!

Cadet Rand went into a dive. Let Stringfellow look out for Stringfellow! Out of that hard dive, the cadet now zoomed. It was a regular Billy H. Hell of a zoom, too. It shot that Nieuport 27 straight up through three hundred feet of vertical air. On the top of that hard, fast zoom—and let Stringfellow look out again!—Rand kicked in full rudder and hard left stick. The ship went over in a half roll, and—

Cadet Rand, upside down, looked for Stringfellow. Stringfellow's ship, also upside down, shot past Rand's and, also rolling, hung on its back up there between the inverted cadet and high heaven. For a split second, while young Rand's heart stopped, the captain's wheels-up craft came mushing down toward the cadet's bottom side. Cadet Rand, here forgetting that Stringfellow must take care of himself, quickly jerked that control stick of his back into his tummy, jammed on full throttle, kicked in rudder, and rolled over into a fallaway dive.

This time, with motor still howling at full gun, the cadet dived plenty. Best that he take lots of time and think this thing out; for there must be a way out, somewhere, somehow. There's a check for every move on earth, and in the air. If a boy can find that check in time. If he can't—well, too bad.

But there was no shaking this man Stringfellow. After young Rand had put more than two thousand feet of this dive above and behind him, the captain was still with and under him. What a game to buck!

DESPERATE now, the cadet took to rolling his ship, right out of line-of-flight. You know, let her have full motor, then kick in full rudder and be set to redress with stick. Stringfellow barrel rolled right along in formation with him. As near as the cadet could tell, the tight flying captain never changed the distance between ships, not even during these lashing, whipping rolls. It was awful. It got a man!

Next, after the barrel rolling had proven to be such a flop, Cadet Rand dropped his nose, then pulled over into a loop. When he was on top of that loop, looking straight down, he could see the captain

down there, looking straight up. And as soon as the cadet had swooped up and redressed his ship's flight, well, Stringfellow was right under him again. A second and third loop worked just as poorly as the first.

After that, and after a few minutes of thought, and still letting the captain look out for the captain's safety, the cadet began to mix 'em up a bit. First, he'd start down as though for a loop. And when the nose came swooping up to the horizon, he'd throw his stick over, kick in full rudder, and flop over and back in a *renversment.* Coming down and back on the reverse dive, Rand would be sure to find his hard flying tormentor there waiting for him, all set to team up as before, down under. Then Cadet Rand, though he knew it would do no good, pulled a few of his best and fastest Immelmann turns. When he'd come off his half roll, at the top of the turn, Stringfellow, too, would be coming off his roll. And right under the cadet. Nice mess of fish!

Well, Cadet Rand figured, one or the other of us is sure to die of old age if we live that long. And it surely did seem that this combat—if it was a combat—might be going on when the actual war was long over.

The cadet, thinking along these lines, had just about given up all hope of getting in a position where he could do his bit toward proving that he was all set to quit Field 8. Quit Field 8! After this disastrous session, with his banners in the dust, he was likely to become a fixture at 8. Ye gods! After this showing, would Stringfellow ever put his John Henry on a *lache* for Rand? The betting was that he wouldn't.

"I'll bet," Cadet Rand was telling himself, "that the captain thinks I cheated more than usual when I got into Air Service."

And it was while the cadet was just cruising along, trying to think of something that he hadn't already tried, that he again chanced a hurried glance downward—just to make sure that he was keeping clear of that whirling prop that was likely to carve his ship's belly at any ungiven time. And as he glanced, he again found Stringfellow missing.

Captain Stringfellow wasn't directly below. Nor was he to either side. And he wasn't above. So Cadet Rand lay that old Nieuport 315 over in a steep bank, and while he was thus *veraging* he made a close study of as much sky and earth as was possible. And there, away off toward Field 8, a ship was shagging low across the green world. It was hiballing for 8. Rand watched that ship shoot its landing; and he was satisfied that the captain had grown weary of playing with a kid, and cut for home. The cadet glanced at his timepiece. His allotted flying period was just about up, so he too turned back for Field 8.

When Cadet Rand landed and taxied up to the deadline, he saw Captain Stringfellow's great length standing on the threshold of the flying office. The captain was there to watch his landing students, and smoke a cigaret or two. Both of which occupations seemed to please him.

The cadet unloaded from his ship; and a mac asked—

"Was that you going round and round with the captain, off there in the south?"

"Are you kidding me?" Rand shot back.

"Hell, no," the mac replied, as he lifted the Nieuport's tail to his shoulder and started to walk the small bus toward a hangar. "Why?"

"Because," Cadet Rand answered, "I wouldn't blame you if you were . . . Here, have a butt— Sure, keep the pack —don't mention it."

Well, with that flight ended, the cadet had to make his usual report at the flying office. But he hated like the very devil to face the long Stringfellow who still stood there on the threshold. Of course, if he wished, Rand could put off the report and make it later. But Rand wasn't that sort of *hombre.* This thing of facing a man who had made a monkey of him wasn't easy, but the cadet was man enough to do it. So he dragged his unwilling steps down that way.

Cadet Rand could have avoided Stringfellow by going around to the side and making his report through a window. Instead, he came right up to the long one and saluted.

"Captain," he said, "that was me in ship 315. If I had made any kind of showing, Captain, I would have come here a-running to ask you what you thought of my air work. But in view of the rotten show I put on—well, I'm going to ask you that same question, anyhow. Captain Stringfellow, what do you think of me?"

"Have a smoke, Cadet?" Stringfellow asked, and he extended the pack from which he had just taken one. "You were in 315?" he then repeated. "Yeah, I remember you. I should; that was the last ship I tangled with. Right, eh?"

"Yes, sir," the cadet checked. "It wasn't much of a tangling, Captain. At least, not from your point of view. But I want to know the worst. I want to know just what you think of me. I'm anxious, sir."

Captain Stringfellow stood there and looked far away toward distant St. Valentine. Then he spoke slowly, balancing, weighing, making each word fly its proper place in formation, as it were.

"Cadet," he said, "you took off like a gull. You flew like an eagle. But you landed like a ton of bricks."

For a moment Cadet Rand was stopped, silent. There it was again—that talk about bum landings. However, the captain had said, "you flew like an eagle," and perhaps he meant it. So the cadet found words and started to put them to use, as was a cadet's way.

"Captain, you say that my air work is good—that I flew like an eagle. Then why can't I get a *lache* from 8? You know, I'm—"

"Ah-ah!" Captain Stringfellow interrupted. "Don't say it. I know just what you're going to spring— 'I'm not going to fight the Boche on the ground' . . . That, Cadet, is what they all say. For a fact, way back in the dim past, I kind of recall having pulled that line myself. Yes, sir, maybe I'm the guy who first framed that oft-mentioned fact. And it's a good argument too, Cadet. I can see it your way, no kidding.

"How many flying hours have you had?" the captain asked.

"More than two hundred," Cadet Rand answered.

"Ye gods, Curtiss, can that be Wright? Why, Cadet, that's a whole lot of air time. If you can't set 'em down now, chances are you never will. After all, good landings and fine setdowns are more or less gifts of God. It's a thing that you can't perfect through sweat and swearing. Now, Cadet, the best ship landing pilot in France, or elsewhere, is right on this field. But over and above knowing how to land 'em, this man can't or won't do a thing in the air. For a fact, he wouldn't bank a ship more than fifteen degrees for a million bucks.

"Yes, sir, it's the air work that counts; and your air work is good. You were great. Tip-top in every department, Cadet."

"Are you trying to give me a ride round the field, Captain?" the cadet asked. "You know that I know that I never had a chance."

"Forget that," Stringfellow said. "I was just feeling pretty good this afternoon, and that's why I stuck close under your ship. It was bad judgment on my part. Of course you never had a chance. You see, there's a whole flock of psychologies fly along with me when I tangle with you students. Now, you knew that it was my ship, right away. And you know that I'm supposed to be the big brass hat on this field. And, knowing that, you know that you must treat me like a pet; and especially when I'm in the position that I occupied on this hop.

"No, Cadet, you didn't have a chance. But you did fly fine. You've got that something that makes Osgoods and Austins and Munroes. And by the way, Lieutenant Munroe reported that your air work was above par. I guess that's why I pushed you so hard on this hop. But, of course, Lieutenant Munroe also

reported that your getaway and landing were pretty rough. Then you said, well, you know what you said; and I agree that you are right. No, sir, you are not going to fight the Boche on the ground. It's the air for you, Cadet."

"You mean," Cadet Rand said, "you're going to give me the air from Field 8? Going to *lache* me, Captain?"

"I'll let you make that choice, Cadet. I need another good combat man here on 8. If you want to stick around and practise up on your take-offs and landings, for a few weeks or a month, I'll have you assigned to the work. But I know you don't, so I'll sign your *lache* any time you say. What do you say?"

"Why," the cadet said, "you're putting me in a tougher place than you had me half an hour ago. You're being white to me. You're offering me a chance to stick around here and fly with regular men—Austin, Osgood, Munroe and yourself—and how can I make my choice now without being a bum? You make it for me—no—you might—"

"I've made it for you," Stringfellow told the cadet. "You go out of 8 with the next group. That will be in the morning. But if you ever want to come back to Field 8 and put in some more training time, come. And don't be afraid to come back if you get a hunch that you need it. Other good pilots have done it. There are some who have been in and out of these fields more than a few times. You know, Cadet, a man can't be too good at this stuff.

"Well, anyway, so's we won't be getting too damn sentimental, I hope you have lots of luck on the Front. And I hope you have a load of fun between here and the Front. You'll stop off at Paris, eh, on the way to Orly? Sure, they all do. Spend a week there, if you're wise.

"There'll be quite a gang of you men going out of here in the morning. Fifteen of you. That's a good big crowd for train fun, what?"

"It is," the cadet agreed. "Many thanks, Captain. If there's nothing else, right now, I'll be going to quarters and start getting packed for the shove-off."

"Hop to it," Captain Stringfellow told him. "And, cadet, if you find the time, for the love of an old pair of shoes, drop me a line. Hundreds of students before you have said that they would; and never a note have I had from any one of them. It's hell on us men back here at 8. We have no idea of what the Front is like. We'll never see it; and it used to be our dream too, you know. Don't forget us."

"I'll keep in touch with you," Rand promised. "For a fact, Captain, I'll make contacts with you, if it's the last official thing I ever do. I mean that, too. So long. See you before I go, maybe."

CADET RAND joined the other hell whooping, about-to-leave students. Fifteen happy men, in any one camp, is a lot of happy men; and they're likely to be making a great noise about their good luck. Yeah, about good luck that sends them up to die, perhaps. War, and the man who makes war, is funny. You'd think that each had received money from home. And Rand was the happiest of the group; for he was still more than a little surprised at the turn of events.

Rand's closest pal, Bugs Cole, was also among the outgoing fifteen. The two flying mates, with Rand just one class behind Cole, had gone from field to field together. For a while it had seemed that Bugs would pull ahead and leave Rand behind at Field 8; so, as is very plain to see, there was a double cause for joy. War made close pals, and partings were likely to hurt like the very devil.

Rand and Cole, with the rest of that loud and lucky mob, were all set to run into Issoudun for the last night's doings when a slow moving orderly came into flying cadet's barracks. He had a slip of official looking paper in his mitt; and he spoke his piece.

"Attention, y'flea bitten kaydets," he barked. All of the outgoing fifteen and a few others quit whatever they were doing and turned to listen to whatever this orderly might have to say. An orderly

from flying office might be good luck or bad luck, joy or grief.

"These seven loopin' lavas—Davis, Cole, Buchanan, Reed, Mann, Rand an' Peel—report to flying office, an' tootie-damnsweet," the orderly advised. "An' if y'have tears t'shed, now's th' time to shed 'em."

"What do you mean?" all of the seven demanded, in one voice.

"You'll find out," the orderly threatened, and he went out of that barrack.

The seven cadets named organized themselves and started for flying office. Captain Stringfellow, plus a very long face, was there. One by one, as they came in, Stringfellow checked them from his list.

"I have a load of very bad news for you seven men," the long captain said to the wondering, silent seven that had drawn itself up on a company front before his desk. "It's an old story—that is, for for this flying office—but a thing that can happen only once for you. Well, to be done with it, a call just came down the line for seven men to be sent two-place flying. You men are elected."

Seven hearts were filled with a grief that none but a pursuit pilot can fully understand. The world reeled, and mouths went dry. The seven, perhaps, wished that they were kids again—instead of eighteen or twenty—so that they might bust right out and cry. It would have helped a bit, maybe, but it couldn't have restored *chasse* status. And with the passing of that status, all things ended—for the seven. Air and its one-place thrill was gone. War, for sure, would be hell.

Fly two-place ships, observation, or bombing—demotion!

It was young Rand who found his voice first. It wasn't much of a voice, at that, for it wavered.

"Why, Captain," he asked, "were we elected? Did it have to be us? Why, the whole Air Service—"

"Cadet," Captain Stringfellow said, "Air Service headquarters sent this message—" he waved the official communication—"and it says to assign seven available pilots for duty with the observation school at the earliest possible date. Assigned pilots are to report for duty at Romorantin immediately."

By then, as was the way with cadets, all seven men had found voice. And they voiced. To a man, each of the seven swore that Air Service headquarters could send them to two-place work or send them to hell, on a one way ticket, but Air Service headquarters could never make them fly two-place style.

"I'm a pursuit man," each Yank told the world, "and I'll fly pursuit even if they put me on the butt end of an Irish anchor. Observation, eh? Observation be damned! Observation is going to gather unto itself seven of the most useless pilots that ever piled it. And that's our promise."

"And having said all those wild things," Captain Stringfellow mused, "you men will go up Front and do good work. I know you will. And I know how you feel now. It's a tough dish, and all that, but a two-place pilot has to be brave. When you find yourself trying to take care of that man in the rear pit, well, you men will do your stuff. But at any rate, sad to say, the matter is out of our hands. You've got to go."

Others of the seven said other things. Bugs Cole, being wild only in air, said nothing. However, as he and the other six went out, Stringfellow saw Bugs Cole shove back a tear with the heel of his hand.

Captain Stringfellow turned to Lieutenant Barso. Barso was a sort of clerk in flying office.

"There goes seven men who will not fail to remember me as the no good egg who sent them to observation," the captain remarked. "For all time, Lieutenant, I'll be the goat."

"Loud cadets!" Lieutenant Barso grunted, with derision.

"Just cadets," Stringfellow repeated; and added, "Men of destiny. The brave brood of the eagle. You know, lieutenant, I wonder if headquarters, and we who

savor of headquarters, knew that we too must face that Front—would we be so damned apt about shuffling 'just cadets' around? That Front, Lieutenant, is awful; and in the slower two-place ship it is hell expanded to the Nth power . . . Oh, well, they go, we stay, and there's an end to it."

Within two weeks of their departure from Field 8, Issoudun, those seven cadets were elevated to the dignity of first lieutenants. Also, at the end of that second week, those seven wild men were on the Front. With four others, behind Major Cooley, they had flown their own ships from Romorantin to the lines. It was the first time that such a unit had hopped out of the deep S.O.S. for the fire. The eleven ships were presented upon the Front as an experiment; and some laughed.

The rest of Air Service—Yank, French and English—watched. And they said it would fail, for no pilot should be sprung upon the fighting Front without a breaking-in period. So it was up to these men to show the watchers that they were there, and that they wouldn't allow themselves to be pulled off that Front. They had to take care of themselves; and they took great care to do that little thing on every mission flown. For a fact, G.H.Q. had to start unpacking extra boxes of chest medals that were to be hung on these two-place whizzes. As for the rest of Air Service—the rest of Air Service began to sit up and admit that it was taking notice. There was plenty to see, at that.

BUT THE American Front was due to see something else worth while, for Captain Stringfellow had been relieved from Field 8 duty. That surprised nobody more than it did the captain. Also, it pleased just about everybody, for in all Air Service there was no man more highly honored than that long combater. Sending Stringfellow Frontward was just as though Air Service headquarters had decided to shove its champion into the ring. It was an acquiescence and a challenge, all in one. The S.O.S. needed Stringfellow, and it was a wonder that they ever turned him loose. As for the Front, well, that hard boiled Front could tear down a Colossus as quick as it would wash out a tramp. It was as Stringfellow had told Rand: No man could be too good for that Front. No man could ever be good enough, for that matter.

The summer of '18 was drawing to a close. Air Service—Yank Air Service—was working at white heat. Work was being done and a price was being paid. Ships, ever changing models, were poor at best; and the flower of Yankdom was spinning into the ground in ever increasing numbers. But Paris and vicinity was just overloaded with young squirts who boasted the spreadwings on their left breast; and these were ever willing to fill the gaps. And fill 'em they did. So good boys went and other good boys came right along and asked—

"When do we rise and fly?"

Fall and that Argonne affair held the A.E.F. entranced; and the Yank measure was to be taken between the Meuse and the Aire. Not a very great stretch of country for a bunch of boys who were in the habit of calling for lots of territory. No, not much country, but what country! And what a sky above, around and beyond that tucked-in strip of hell! Sky—here was plenty of that sky stuff for the wild ones who had been asking for it. Here was to be a new sky that would be filled with more kinds of craft than a Rand or Cole had ever hoped to see, and meet. It was going to be a ship crowded sky. Plenty glory for all!

In front line air, as in other branches, the green hand of today would be the past master of tomorrow. War makes 'em and breaks 'em quick. It's got to be that way, for there's so little time for thumb twirling. So if a flying man came along with the rank of captain to his credit, that man had to do a captain's work. It so followed that Stringfellow was called upon to do things, in a few weeks, which in peace time—well a man wouldn't have to fill such jobs in peace time.

Anyway, cramming and working the clock around, day after day, Captain Stringfellow was operations officer for his pursuit group before three weeks of his front line life had been hurried behind him. On top of that, the long one was even finding time to fill flying missions in person. Quite a good size order for any busy airman.

Up through the Argonne the Yank balloon lines had been catching particular hell. Covering these balloons was one of the most important pieces of work confronting Stringfellow. And the pursuit coverage of a balloon line is one dab of offside work that is bound to be unloved by any pursuit man. A pursuit pilot, as he sees it, has an inalienable right to the heights. That's the way they've brought him up, as Rand might say. But on the balloon patrol, operations officer shoved a pin into the air map, at about two thousand feet, and said:

"There's your ceiling. Don't raise that pin. When you're wanted, and wanted bad, we want to find you right there. That's all. Take the air now and ride herd on those rubber cows; and see to it that them there crusty Boche rustlers don't run any of 'em off."

Notwithstanding that order, and the good efforts of the pursuit men under Stringfellow's guidance, the ever present German hunter did run those rubber cows off. Sneaking up from the east, beyond Mouzon and his strongholds near Sedan, the enemy airman would pick said rubber cows off their long cables with sickening regularity. Those rustling balloon busters could come low through that wooded country and, with their camouflaged ships, pull the trick before the Yanks at the alert position could take the air.

Of course, with Spad tanks only good for slightly more than two hours of flight, those pursuit men could not be on the wing all the time. And if their alert field, an emergency base only a few short kilometers behind the actual Front, failed to pick up the oncoming Hun when that enemy was yet a few kilometers removed, then it was too late. And one or more "eyes of the army" were sure to be thumbed out; with an observer or two going down with those burning bags.

It was tough on the pursuit men; and many times tougher on the balloon crews. And those balloon men, as time and the offensive went on, got very sore about the whole mess. For a fact, one balloon observer, a Lieutenant Mark Mahan, was shot out of the air three times in one day. Which was a lot of parachuting for any man.

That night, when the bags were safely cradled, Lieutenant Mark Mahan, being quite mad, decided that he'd go directly to the top and talk this matter over with the proper brass hats, wherever they might be found. In the course of the buck passing that followed, Mahan was finally advised to find Captain Stringfellow.

Ask him—they told Mahan—what t'hell's wrong with Air Service.

Lieutenant Mahan, being an artillery officer, an old line man, was very willing to ask anybody what was wrong with Air Service. It would be a pleasure.

Captain Stringfellow was alone over a map when a hard boiled rap came to his door. And hard boiled, parachute jumping Mahan booted his way into that small, candlelit room that posed as an operations office. Stringfellow looked at the newcomer and wondered just what Artillery had to crab about this time. He didn't have to wait long.

"Mahan's the name," Artillery announced, extending the hand of interbranch nonfriendship. "Maybe you've heard of me, Captain. I'm the guy who's spending all his time practising parachute jumping up here in the woods. I'm getting good at it, too."

"Glad to know you, Mahan," the long one said. "You bet I've heard about you. Jumped a few today, didn't you?"

"Three!" Mark Mahan barked. "And, Captain, considering the fact that it was a short day, that wasn't bad. You see, the clouds didn't blow away, up where we are, till along toward noon. Then, when they got my last perch from under me, it

was 5:15. You know, all I did today was go up and come down. There's no profit there. It tires a man out, Captain. And if my folks knew that I was doing this county fair stuff they'd be worried to death. It isn't right."

"It surer'n hell isn't," Captain Stringfellow agreed.

"That's why I dropped in to see you," Mahan now said. "Just what's to be done about it, Captain?"

"Sit down—have a smoke," Stringfellow suggested. "Let's talk this thing over. There must be a way out—I mean, without going out via the parachute route. You see, Lieutenant, this is the way my department is fixed. I'm short of equipment, and we can't get more ships till the French decide on a new price for the next delivery of Spad 220's. They're riding the crest of a boom market, you know, and Uncle Sam holds a bottomless sock. You and I don't know so much about that, but the French do. We get it straight that the factories are turning out ships fast enough, but the matter of finance comes before any anti-parachute arguments. Anyway, Lieutenant, I can't see my way to give you men any more protection than you're getting. That, I know, sounds like an unfriendly statement of facts. However, it *is* fact.

"What's more, it's equally rough on you and yours, and me and mine. My men, working in twos and threes, are out of luck when enemy attacks come west over the tree tops in tens and twelves. In the last three days, while you men have been losing balloons and crew men, my unit has lost seven ships. Three in flames, with pilots gone. Two got back to crash on the right side of the lines. Two ships—well, we don't know what happened to two. Right now, ready for the morning's morning, I have three Spads set to take off for the alert field, come daylight. Three's not many, Lieutenant."

"No, three's not a hell of a gang," Lieutenant Mahan mused, and idly turned the eye filling pages of the latest copy of *La Vie Parisienne* which he found on Stringfellow's littered desk. "But how about the rest of the pursuit ships operating under this office?"

"Yes, we have other ships," Stringfellow agreed. "Also, we have other work. The observation ships, spotting fire for your own artillery, they call for our coverage too, Lieutenant. But even in that department we're short handed. We don't begin to have the ships necessary. Those observation men should have more protection; and they, too, are coming into this office, daily, to ask why."

"Hell!" Mahan again mused, tossing *La Vie Parisienne* to one side, "those two-seater babies don't need help from anybody, Captain. I've watched them for weeks. To call a spade a spade, and a shovel a shovel, we balloon men have received more coverage from observation than from pursuit. There's three or four of those kids flying these new French ships. What do they call 'em—Sam—no; Salmsons. That's the name. The bus with the big cartwheel motor out front. Radial motors, is what you call 'em, eh? Well, those kids are smarter with those kites than most of your single-seater men are with their Spads. I know what I'm shouting about, Captain. Those wild babies saved my neck twice in three days. And what's more, they not only shagged the Boche, but they got them.

"Burned 'em down. Hard guys, those two-seater boys. I've met a few of 'em in town. Lieutenants Rand and Cole are the top cutters in that group. Then there's Davis and Buchanan. There's a few more teams. They seem to work that way; in teams. Now listen here, Captain. Maybe this suggestion, coming from a man outside your branch, isn't worth a damn. Perhaps it's entirely unethical, offside. But, at any rate, I'm going to make it. How about having these good teams of two-seater pilots detailed to the balloon line?"

CAPTAIN STRINGFELLOW knew that the suggestion wasn't so good. That is, it wasn't worth a damn as seen from the pursuit group's point of view. To have

observation men quit observation and come down to the balloon line would be one awful black eye for pursuit, even if pursuit was unable to remedy present defects. After all, pursuit is one branch of air; and observation is another. Between the two, in spite of the fact that they both operate out of the same general headquarters, there's a world of difference, and a pile of competition. Stringfellow, for the time being, didn't know what to say.

However, being wise, he tried a shift. Stalled a bit. But he held to the same general subject, in order to avoid offending the red hot Mahan.

"You say Rand and Cole, Davis and Buchanan, and some more of those wild men have been making quick history on that balloon line of yours, Lieutenant? I know those boys. Every one of them. I've been so busy that I haven't had time to look them up. And I intended to. Strange, Lieutenant, but their names, as far as I know, have never been in orders for any of this spectacular work."

"Damn right they haven't," Mahan said. "Captain, that hell hootin' gang, what's left of them, are in bad. I don't know just what the trouble is. One of your Air Service family affairs, I guess. Anyway, some of your enlisted men told some of our enlisted men that your high rollers are sitting up nights trying to think of ways and means to trip these boys. I know this, though. These two-seater hellers have asked us to forget that we've ever seen their ships back in useful territory. If they're caught off their assigned air missions, so they tell us, they'll be in for a burning, sure."

"I've heard all about that too." Stringfellow laughed, and added, "Lieutenant, it's the small wars within a great war that make of war what Sherman said it was. Too bad that some men won't grow up. You see, Lieutenant, there's really nothing wrong with this group of observation men. Of course, to a certain extent, they're in bad; for they were game enough to kick over the traces when they were pulled off pursuit work and sent up here as bi-place flyers. I know. I'm the one who sent them; and this man Rand told me then that he'd fly pursuit, and nothing but pursuit, no matter where they sent him."

"Well," Lieutenant Mark Mahan put in, "the kid is sure a man of his word. And that goes for his sidekicks, too. I'm for 'em."

"You and I both," Captain Stringfellow agreed. "And the more I consider the thing, Lieutenant Mahan, the greater your suggestion tempts me. We made pursuit men of these; and, I'll tell all and sundry, they were good in the making and well nigh peerless in the finished state. That is, when I sent them out of Field 8, Issoudun, talking to themselves like mad men. Well, Lieutenant, none but a fool would forge a fine blade to be used only for hog sticking; and top usage is none too good for Rand, Davis, and ilk. So, tossing branch dignity to the well known four winds, I'll swallow pride for my pursuit group and go out into the night with you.

"We'll go down the road for four or five kilometers. There we'll find Major La Page who sticks very close to his night work. The major, you know, is operations officer for the observation squadrons. He's a good sort, La Page is. I feel sure that he holds nothing against these wild ones or anybody else. The major and I have had occasion to do little things for one another, here and back at Issoudun; and we can talk this thing over, superseding all official Air Service orders, past, present and future. After all, we three should be able to determine Germany's future. Let's go. You got a car with you, Lieutenant? Fine—"

Major La Page listened and agreed, fully.

"Can I spare them from artillery observation and fire regulating! Say, look here, Stringfellow; we Air Service people are nice people, and all that, but artillery would never miss us if we were back under the sidewalk awnings in gay Paree. Let's not kid outselves about this thing. Ninety per cent. of all useful observations are

taken from the balloons; and those balloons should be protected. Only today, in a little huddle back at the P.C., that very subject had the center of the floor. All deep thinkers were bewailing the fact that you had so few ships for the work. However, not one of the deep thinkers thought of diverting our Salmsons to that balloon line. Of course—" Major La Page went into an explanatory apology here— "it wasn't up to my department to cut in or double over on your sky. You understand, Stringfellow?"

"Sure," the long captain agreed. "And it isn't my idea, this thing of asking you to put your men down under where the going is so one sided, Major. Blame the lieutenant, here. Yes, sir, Mahan did it."

"Well," the major decided, "we'll ease into this thing by degrees. First thing in the morning I'll put two ships on the line for you. Guess I'll detail Lieutenants Rand and Cole—each with a good gunner—to the work. I'll just have to give them a hint, not an order, and they'll be on their way. Bless their wild Yank hearts, they have no sense. You've seen these men on your balloon line before, Lieutenant Mahan. Don't tell me you haven't. I know all about it. Wish t'hell I was twenty-one again, 'stead of fifty-six, and I'd at least take a ride with one of these two. By the damn, what fun there is in this war for you young squirts!"

"You bet, Major," Lieutenant Mahan laughed. "Now take me for example—I get my big kick parachute jumping."

"We'll try to put a stop to your fun," the major promised.

THE NEXT morning was one of clear skies. The fogs had burned out of the low places, and smoked out through the tree tops, early. It promised to be a long, full day. A day in which the line outfits would yell for observations early. It would be a day sure to find those rubber cows motionless at their cable ends in plenty of time to put Mahan in line for all kinds of records. That is, if the enemy had made up his mind to repeat yesterday's activities. Leave that to the enemy —any enemy. War wouldn't be war if mere man failed to return to such a feast.

Captain Stringfellow, flying along with those three ships assigned to the balloon line, hadn't reached the alert field before he had spotted two of the balloons already in position. This, within the five or six kilometers of visibility; which was very good visibility at 6:15 A.M. Already, off to the east, another flight of the long captain's Spads were climbing for altitude. That flight of seven were going out and up for regular contact patrol. Altitude. They'd get all of that stuff a Spad could possibly grab down. Lucky dogs!

But Stringfellow and these three must stay under the pin; and it was a pin of Stringfellow's own pushing. Well, if a man is willing to buck the game that he deals, other men should be willing to follow. And Lieutenants Nash, White and Normand were right on Stringfellow's tail, and plenty willing. They were always that way, for a fact.

Captain Stringfellow, for one, didn't mind the low flying demands for under the pin work. As he saw it, for a new man on the Front, it was far easier to watch half a sphere of sky—the sky dome with the earth as its base—than watch a full sphere of sky, say from ten thousand feet altitude. Tell you what, as a pilot goes up he begins to make things easier for the enemy. That's all right for the wild young ones, perhaps, but for an old combat man, beginning to feel very ancient in air, it's not so good. The more flying hours a man has, the more prudent that man grows. Captain Stringfellow was a man to watch out for his royal American neck. Not because he considered it so darned royal, nor because there was the slightest taint of yellow, but just because he was old enough to realize that he was filling a position of weight.

And another thing: The few front line missions which the long captain had flown at altitudes, missions on which he

had seen some bits of action, had convinced Stringfellow that the old acrobatic days were things of the past. That is, acrobatic flying wasn't the system used in actual conflict. Of course, even before meeting the condition face to face, the captain had known that truth. But it was more impressive when brought home to a man first hand. It was something real, that vital thing of locating a very small spot in a very large sky, above you, and then watching it grow larger. Diving you! Diving you with both Spandous blinking red! Delivering the stuff right in the old front office for you. And after that dive, that was all. If the diver failed to hang it on the divee, then said diver—being wise in his generation—kept right on diving. For those who fired, then dived away, lived to fire and dive another day.

Captain Stringfellow—he told about this later—was musing along these lines when he and his three pursuit mates arrived at their behind the Front, alert field. There, under the trees at the edge of the small clearing, were two pup tents, several drums of gas and half a dozen mechanics who watched and waited. The half dozen enlisted men, who stood no calls nor put out salutes to any man, boasted that theirs was the softest graft in the A.E.F.

On the approach to that small field, Lieutenant Nash dropped off Stringfellow's left and glided in for a landing. The captain and his other two men went ahead on a circle of the field; and at the east turn, Stringfellow took a closer view of the two balloons that were dead ahead, about three kilometers removed. In his turn, not more than three hundred feet off the ground, the captain noticed much activity among those who walk and fight and wonder, and hope that the damned Air Service has guessed right about the enemy positions ahead. Wave after wave of those earth bound Yanks were moving through the clearings; while the only road in Stringfellow's view was crowded with one way transit, eastward. Stringfellow was willing to let them have his share of that!

When that turn of the field had been completed, Nash's Spad had landed and taxied off the clear space. And Lieutenant White, quitting the captain's right, throttled his power and started a fish-tailed sideslip for his setdown. Stringfellow and Lieutenant Normand carried on for another quick turn of the alert field. Normand would be next down.

"Things began to happen right then," Captain Stringfellow told later. "I didn't intend landing. I was going to push ahead up the line and take a look at the balloons. I wanted to be on hand when Rand and Cole showed up. It was such a swell morning I intended taking on the former for a few turns of acrobatic combat. In view of the fact that Rand would be flying a Salmson, he would be more than willing to go round and round with me. I was wondering if I could make myself known to him. But, as I said, things began to happen.

"Looking far ahead, beyond the two balloons, I could locate a pair of dots high in the sky, say at about five thousand. They were perhaps five or six kilometers away. These, I figured, must be Rand and Cole. A few minutes or so of flying would bring them over the balloons, so I turned to give Lieutenant Normand a wave, and—the lieutenant wasn't on my tail. I got a strange hunch. I flew a tight, right *verage*, without knowing why. The minute my ship went over into that vertical bank, I gazed down between the right wings, and there, just hitting the ground, was Lieutenant Normand's Spad. It hit in flames. The boy'd been shot down, shot off my tail; and the enemy pilot who had made that cut was strafing across the alert field, nose down and guns wide open. I saw Lieutenant White, just setting his wheels on the small space. He piled up, rolled over, and his ship was washed out. It was a complete washout, too. The Boche got White too.

"With that quick job off his hands, the enemy—he was flying a Fokker VII—was lifting out of the field, zooming the trees at the northeast side and carrying on

toward the balloon line. When he ended that zoom and redressed his ship, the Fokker pilot was flying at my own altitude; and I was pretty close behind as we went away from the alert base. Lieutenant Nash, by the way, was taking off to follow.

"Far ahead of that lone Fokker, those two balloons and the oncoming Salmsons were again in my eyes; but that's not all. The two balloons were under fire; and in that damned, shrinking minute of very useless life I felt tried and convicted. For a fact, they could have washed me out then and there and I'd have thanked them for it.

"AT LAST a half dozen milling Fokkers were going down on those balloons; and the air below the bags seemed to be pretty well filled with parachutes, observers taking to their white allies in a hurry. Right away, I began to wonder what Lieutenant Mahan was thinking of me. No doubt, and you could gamble on it, Mahan was riding one of those slow floating spreads of lazy silk. And how slow and lazy they can be when a man is in a hurry to get ground under his feet again!

"Now, a minute ago, just like the lone ship that had played hell with our alert base, these other enemy ships were no place to be seen. Long before this I'd heard much mention of the 'ambush of clear skies' but the thing is hard to picture. You've got to go up against the stuff before you can appreciate the condition, then you won't be entirely willing to believe all you see—or, all you haven't seen.

"I couldn't close on that single Fokker ahead. I recall turning to see where Lieutenant Nash was; and I saw his ship make the air. That gave me a bit of a thrill, for Nash had proved up in fine style on that balloon line. Good to know that he would be along.

"For some reason—perhaps because so many Fokkers were in each other's way—the enemy pilots had managed to get only one of the two balloons in that first dive. Then, before they could come out of those dives, and turn back to the balloons, Rand and Cole were in on the job. When I say that they were on the job. I mean just that, but I can't begin to show you the picture. In that first dive, Rand and Cole each scored a hit; and two enemy ships went into the ground. One burned down. The other, as they say, hit and splashed. Still and all, counting my man ahead, there were five Fokkers remaining. My man was now in the fight.

"In view of the fact that the tangling ships were just above the tree tops, there was to be little chance for the dive-and-run thing. Here, I figured, would be the place for some acrobatic combat work. I took heart. Rand would be good. So would Cole. As for myself, well, given the choice, of course I'd choose to go round and round. And, I'll tell you, they *were* going round and round. It was five to two, but the sky seemed overcrowded with Salmsons. In no time at all I was sucked into that mess, with Nash hi-balling up from the rear. And, being so new to that sort of thing, I really know little of what came off, once I found myself in that dogfight."

With a gun, plus an official order, you couldn't get Captain Stringfellow to tell you any more about it. It wasn't because he didn't know, either. It was simply that Stringfellow, like all other worthwhile front line pilots, won't talk. That is, they won't talk first person. Now and then, though, they will tell you something about the other fellow; and Rand had this to say about what followed:

"There was old Mr. Rand's dumb and useless son with more Hun pests on his tail than a flea bitten hoss in fly time. No less than three of the five Fokkers buzzing there at one and the same time; and old kid Harry Pratty with both guns gummed up. Was Harry—" Rand's rear seat man— "busy? Is a dog burying a bone on a tin roof busy? Tell you what, old kid Pratty, for the first time in his life, wasn't trying to mooch free smokes—Here, Pratty, have a fag on me.

"And worst of all," Rand would continue, "Bugs Cole was tied down by the other two Fokkers. And were they giving Bugs hell! Oh-oh, you ask him. They were, and Jack Fay—" Cole's gunner— "was going wherever Bugs was going, swinging a nasty gun ring, and doing himself proud. I know because I caught an eyeful of them when I began to wonder why Bugs wasn't giving me a hand. Anyway, we four young soldiers were busy gents. Five was enough, too. We couldn't have taken on another single Fokker, not as a favor, even. Yes, my hearties, there is such a thing as enough. Talk about the saturation point! Wow! We'd reached it!

"And it was then and there that Captain Stringfellow came a-looking for us. You see, we were overdue on the balloon line; and, no doubt, he was surprised and ashamed to find us associating with five pursuit pilots. Right away, without being told, I knew that it was the captain for his dome was sticking up above the windshield like a surprised jack-in-the-box. Guess that was it: he was more surprised than ashamed. After all, Bugs and I weren't fooling, or wasting our old Uncle Sam's time and gasoline—for once. Yep, we were attending to business, and business was good. Even getting better, if possible.

"The captain broke up that buzzing on my tail; and the air around old Pratty and myself began to clear. Don't forget that these Fokkers came looking for balloons, and that their belts were loaded pretty solid with incendiaries and tracers. And, men, that there is very bad ammunition to face. Also, betwixt and between pilots, it is very bad ammunition to have found in your guns if you're knocked down and taken. That's why those five firemen decided to turn and make a run for it as soon as the captain romped in. Three to five was a matter of narrowing the odds. Then again, this other man, Nash, was only a few jumps behind the captain. And on top of all this, seven more of Captain Stringfellow's group were coming down out of the east, for they had seen how busy we were and wanted to get a closer view of men at work.

"So, stringing out in a sort of running fight, the nine of us headed east. Nine shrunk to eight, however, when the captain hung it on one of the Fokkers just north of Dun, a small spot on the map which was in enemy territory at the time. We saw that Fokker pile up in the tree. It was as complete a wreck as you ever hope to see. But the fireman and his smoke bullets were safe, being on the home grounds.

"ONE of the Fokkers developed a hot, smoky motor just after the Meuse was crossed, beyond Stenay, and the other three did the right thing and made that ship's speed their speed. Tell you what, it made you want to give those boys a cheer. That's game stuff in any man's army, you know. Well, that reduction of speed made it all the easier for Bugs and myself. It had reached a place where the Fokkers and the Spads were beginning to pull away from us. Even Nash had come alongside, zoomed us a wave, then forged ahead. And now we were all bunched again; and every so often one of those firemen would fly a quick *verage* and mix things for a few turns. Just, perhaps, to give that one crippled mate a chance to win some sky.

"East of Mouzon, with the captain's other flight of seven only a kilometer or so away, Nash accounted for one of those game ones who had stopped to *verage* and fight. Nash and the enemy pilot went right down among the trees; and the Yank was the only one to come up and carry on. That was quick. Nash hardly lost his place in the push.

"But right there, east of Mouzon, something else again came off that wasn't in the cards. The seven Spads were diving in from the east. At that minute, being big hearted, our pity was on the few game enemy pilots ahead; and our interest was on the seven Yanks who had them all but headed off. And, with our attention so

divided, to a man we failed to spot the shower of black crossed ships that was dropping down from the north.

"Nobody was ever quite sure how many came in that storm, but there were two flights converging on us at once, and those two flights arrived in the same rush. There must have been twenty or more in the combined forces. Of all the doings you've ever seen, you never saw such doings as came off right there between the Chiers and little Mouzon. I don't know how long we milled about there; but at one time I saw two Spads and a Fokker all burning in the air at the same minute. Then one of ours and one of the enemy's collided over the Chiers, and I watched them hit the water. My own gun jammed just after that. And while I worked to clear that jam, flying with the stick between my knees, old kid Pratty knocked a ship off our tail. At the same dizzy second I saw Captain Stringfellow shoot up, right in front of Bugs Cole's prop, hang his ship, vertical, and take off a Fokker that was diving Bugs from the front. Dropping out of his stall, not more than three hundred feet off the ground, the captain let his ship's nose whip and fall through a half turn of a spin. And in that half spin, he opened fire on a Fokker that had just chased a Yank into the ground. The captain got his man; and my jam was clear. I blushingly relate, here and now, that I feel sure that I did some good for myself in the minute that followed. Guess luck was with me.

"But bad luck flew past with Bugs Cole. I caught a flash of him diving near me, and his rear man, Jack Fay, was hanging overside at the end of his long belt. Jack was dead, and Bugs didn't know it. Not at that second, at least; for Bugs was very busy. Presently, with that dive's business finished, Bugs zoomed and passed aft at my left. As he passed he held his left mitt high; and there wasn't much of that good hand left. He'd been hit too, The nut was laughing about it!

"I *veraged*, turned to follow Bugs and get a better look at him. As I leveled out at his rear, he waved again and pointed far out front to the east. There, removed from the rest of the fight by all of a half kilometer, was Captain Stringfellow's ship. We knew that it was the captain because there was a new triangular linen patch on the upper wing, to the right of the center. Just as we discovered him, he was zooming after driving another ship into a forced landing. Before he was out of that zoom, three enemy ships had closed down on him; and those Fokker pilots were giving him plenty of attention, just as though they realized that here was a man worth rubbing out.

"Bugs Cole, as he waved and pointed, turned fully in his belt to make sure that his rear seat man should understand too. Bugs was facing off to the left of his eastbound ship. I'll never forget the expression on his face when he discovered that Jack Fay wasn't standing there to share the doings. Bugs stood on his rudder bar and tried to look into that rear pit. Then he saw the long straps of the gunner's safety belt stretched tight over the right side gunwale of that rear pit. He flopped back in his seat, and hung out over the right side of his pit. He seemed to remain there, motionless, for a long time. But, with his mind fully made up and on the job, Bugs Cole began to lay that ship of his over in a heavy left bank. We saw Jack Fay's body slide with the bank. That inert body came to the very edge of the pit; then Bugs humped the ship, and Jack Fay was back where he belonged. Bugs Cole never looked in our direction again. We were very close to Captain Stringfellow and the three ships following him; and that was proving to be a very hot spot for the captain. Too hot!

"Bugs was leading me by about a hundred yards. Without even changing his direction, to cut in from the side, I saw him shove that Salmson of his right at the oncoming block of planes. Passing in over the captain, he wedged between the Spad and the overhanging death which rode that lone Yank so hard and close. Bugs busted that group of three wide open; and came over in a loop turn in

order to hold his place with them. And above them. Then he held the enemies' attention, too.

"The captain was close to me now. Harry Pratty took time out to reach ahead, pound me on the back, and yell, 'His guns are jammed. And he's hit. And that's plenty tough, guy!'

"It was plenty tough. The captain was handling the ship with feet and knees, while both hands were busy with a double jam. And on his left shoulder, where the captain used to wear a dark brown smear of castor oil, kicked out from his whirling spray rotaries back at Field 8, he was now wearing a brighter smear—blood. All the time, as he came ahead, his ship was dropping what little of altitude it had. He, no doubt, figured that by going down close to the trees that would keep all the danger above him."

THIS is where Lieutenant Rand peters out as a useful story teller, simply because he'd have to tell big things about himself were he to carry on and relate actual facts. As it is, Rand has slowed up the telling more or less, for they say that he wasn't a single wing beat behind Bugs Cole when the latter barged into that mess. Rand is right about one thing, though. Captain Stringfellow "was close to me now"; that is, when Rand looked down and noticed that the captain was fighting a double jam and wearing a bright red smear on his left breast.

Lieutenant Rand was in a position to see all that because Rand's ship was exactly where it had been months before; just no space at all above the captain's. And with Rand doing the close piloting this time, Harry Pratty, swinging that gun ring of his, fought off the attack whenever one or more Fokkers got past Cole. Which, of course, was bound to be pretty often, for Cole had no rear man now to fight them clear of his tail. That tail, too, was catching hell; for a two-seater kill was always such a welcome kill. However, Bugs Cole knew that he'd attract attention and slugs when he went in there; and that's why he went. Anything, you know, to amuse an enemy—or three enemies.

And that's the picture that swept down the Meuse, through fully twelve kilometers, from near Mouzon to Stenay, and beyond. Back under the other fight they passed; and that fight moved with and around them. But there were few of Captain Stringfellow's high patrol seven left. Only three of them, and Nash. Of course, luckily, the superior numbers of the enemy had been cut down. Fact is, they had been weeded out to such an extent that you'd hardly refer to them as superior numbers by the time the dogfight had swept back as far as Dun. And with Dun regained, nearly twenty-five kilometers of that close flying work had covered the hardly conscious Captain Stringfellow.

No longer was he fighting his double jam. That takes much ambition and physical energy; and the captain had neither of these now. He was flying, though. That fine fingered handling of his was just as apt, just as sure as ever, supplementing the unselfish and daring efforts of young Rand. And, all the time, Rand was in a hail of sky creasing tracers and incendiaries that showed where they were going and where they were coming from. Rand's ship was hit, many times. So was the captain's, again and again. How two ships could carry on through such punishment is simply one of those things hard to get, hard to understand. One of those things that go hand in hand with war.

And Cole! Rand and the rest named him right when they called him Bugs, back in the old cadet days. Bugs Cole was sure bugs during the minutes and kilometers that he filled that position overhead and slightly to the rear. A wild man, hog wild! No thought of self. None of the ordinary precautions that go with self-preservation. Taking every chance as it showed up. Forcing the fight to three faster, better gunned ships. Wheeling into those three, time and again, until—until the three were only two. Then, with the odds cut as low as two to

one, Bugs Cole went wilder, if that were possible. To celebrate that event, yelling a yell that could not be heard beyond his own lips, Cole dived Rand, kicked on full rudder and flew a snappy roll directly over his mate. Rand and Pratty, having seen the quick victory, waved back.

And Stringfellow, under that moving canopy of action, was getting closer and closer to that inevitable point where human effort and endurance must strike its colors.

Lieutenant Rand, hanging far overside, looked down and knew that the captain was nearing that point. And always must Rand look down, and ahead. A wrong move, and that minute space between ships would cease to be. A little misjudgment, on Rand's part, and two ships would pile into the ground together. Despite it all, through it all, the long captain was still handling that Spad of his. Half conscious, and with his world in a blur, no doubt, he'd pull up that Spad's nose to clear each rising change of terrain. Then, with those natural barriers passed, the captain would mush his craft earthward again. Always keen about keeping that ship low. Always certain that no attack space would be opened between him and the ground. And how Stringfellow could do that, hard hit as he was, not even another airman—Rand—could guess.

But it was the old combat days at Field 8 living again. And if these two pilots hadn't flown this way before, most certainly the teamwork wouldn't be attempted now. But as long as the captain had a spark of consciousness left in him, Rand knew that there was a factor of safety left, too. And airmen, wartime airmen, didn't demand that the factor of safety be large. It wasn't large in their flying wires, nor in control wires. Nor was the factor of safety large in wing sections, struts and stays, and the rest of the things that they took across hostile skies.

Harry Pratty was yelling. He was yelling above the rest of the noise. Just then, Rand noticed that there was less racket. He turned as Pratty yelled:

"She's all jake! They've beat it!"

And Rand looked higher. Above and behind, rode a few scattered Spads. To the east, going away from there, flew five remaining Fokkers. The dogfight was over.

Rand sensed a slight movement in his ship. He turned again to look at Pratty. Pratty's head was just falling below the cowling of his pit. He waved a stiff wave, tried to smile a queer smile, and then passed from view. Rand, even more than before, looked to his flying. He knew that he had a wounded gunner riding on the floorboards behind him. And Harry Pratty wasn't out of the woods yet.

When Rand looked front this time, he missed the captain. Then he found him again. The captain was gliding into his own just behind the Front alert field. And Captain Stringfellow put that fast Spad down.

Rand put his wheels on the ground, in a short landing, and wheeled to the side, under the trees. Harry Pratty wasn't too bad.

Then Bugs Cole brought his death ship in for a careful, very careful, landing. And Cole had no words to say as he climbed over, lifted Jack Fay from the floorboards, and passed him down to the macs.

One of the macs, watching the ambulance pull away with Captain Stringfellow, Pratty and Jack Fay, asked Rand—

"What do you think, Lieutenant—is the captain bad off?"

"Hell, no," Rand answered. "No, I'll make a guess that he'll pull through."

"Kind of tough on him, though," the mac carried on, after mooching a smoke from Rand. "He had to send all these other *bon pilotes* out to fly and die under the pin, and now he gets it pretty bad—and under the pin, too."

"I think he'd prefer to have it that way, Sergeant," Rand said. "If you'll throw a little gas and oil into this bus of mine I'll be getting back to the balloon line. I might be able to do some good for myself, even alone. Anyhow, it will be on the way home."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A NOTE from Gordon MacCreagh, of our writers' brigade, about the diet of condors:

Centerport, L. I.

Has nobody written in as yet to say that condors regularly raid the Chincha Islands? These are the guano islands off the Peruvian coast that pollute so much of the southern atmosphere when the wind is right. The Peruvian government maintains a small staff of rifle sharpshooters on the islands for the sole purpose of shooting off the condors, which they accuse of eating the eggs *and young* of the guano birds that nest there.

It seems that the inference would be, not that condors object to fresh meat, but that they are not equipped to pursue and capture live animals; at all events, no live animals that have any agility or speed.

I can't imagine that a dog just killed by anything else would taste any different than a dog just killed by a condor. All that would be necessary would be for the condor to be able to catch and kill his dog. And if a fledgling in a nest tastes good to a condor, why not a grown up chicken—if he could catch it?

—GORDON MACCREAGH

And a few last words on the subject by Charles H. Coe, who started the discussion:

Miami, Florida

Mr. Charles C. Teall says in *Adventure* (Feb. 1st): "In your November 1st issue I note what Mr. Coe has to say about the buzzard's sense of smell. Maybe they are not gifted in that special sense or maybe their idea of perfume is different from ours, but I would like him to tell how they identify a coming feast otherwise."

Among land birds none so thoroughly scan such a vast extent of territory in search of their food as do the vultures. This truth applies with full force to our own turkey buzzard (so-called but really a true vulture). It is reasonable to assume that they soar over every square mile of their geographical range.

The turkey buzzard is specially gifted with a most remarkably keen and observing eyesight. It always is on the lookout from its lofty viewpoint. With head inclined downward, evidently it scrutinizes every inch of the earth below.

KILL a snake or a small animal and leave the carcass exposed on the ground, and in a short time—long before a putrefying odor is given off—one or more buzzards will spy it and come down to investigate. If putrefaction has not set in, they will flap to nearby trees and remain therein (often "saying grace," as it is called) until their repast is ready.

If a steer or other large animal dies on the range or in open woods, the vultures of the neighborhood soon discover it. By the time the carcass is decomposed there will be many of these useful scavengers around the carrion, some from the neighborhood and others from distant parts. Indeed, it is highly probable that some of them came from a distance of one hundred miles or more!

HOW did they discover the carrion—by their sense of smell? No, indeed; because the vulture's sense of smell is only slightly developed; and further, because they come from *all directions!* Therefore the wind did not carry the scent of the carrion to *all* of them anyhow. And only a comparative few even *saw* the carcass! How, then, did the distant arrivals learn of the feast that awaited them?

They discovered it by *observation.* To illustrate: An accident occurs in a city or open space. Some are near enough to see it, but others more distant do not. The latter, however, notice others running to a certain point, and curiosity prompts them to do likewise. The vultures operate on the same principle, but not from curiosity; hunger is the drawing card.

THE common movement of the species is soaring in great circles, that lap and overlap each other. When they are seen by other members of the family, at varying distances away, to cease their soaring and make a bee-line for other parts, the buzzard inference is that there is carrion somewhere awaiting them; so they fall in line and swiftly glide in the wake of the leader. This procedure is repeated by others and still others from distant localities.

Many times I have sat my horse, not far from carrion where turkey buzzards, black vultures, an eagle or two and a few crows were assembled, and watched new comers arrive. Those that came from great distances descended in graceful circles from high in the heavens, followed at intervals by others. It always was an interesting sight, as readable as an open book.

MANY years ago Capt. Mayne Reid, one of the keenest observers of Nature, proved to his own satisfaction at least that vultures did not discover carrion by their sense of smell. An animal was killed after dark and allowed to become decomposed under a tarpaulin. The usual number of the birds were wheeling overhead the next day, but none of them came down to the carcass until it was uncovered, when many of them assembled in an hour's time. Some might assume that the tarpaulin scared them away, but it was allowed to remain near the carcass.

Although the turkey buzzard is repulsive when at its feasts, it has several admirable traits. It is not a robber, like the eagle, nor is it quarrelsome; it has a live-and-let-live disposition, minding its own business and rarely molesting anything living. On the ground it is awkward and unattractive, but in the air it is supreme, the very type of the poetry of motion, compared to which the airplane is a poor imitation.—CHARLES H. COE

ON THE formation of continents. A reader queries Edgar Young of Ask Adventure regarding evidence for his theory.

Tulare, Cal.

In the interest of the veracity of all statements found in *Adventure,* which I have come to respect highly, I want to quibble a little with you in a field about which I know something, though little enough at that. I refer to your article entitled, "The Cape Horn Gold Rush," in the Dec. 1st, 1930 issue of *Adventure*; and particularly to the last paragraph of that article. You say: ". . . The geology is queer. The bars show remains of kangaroos, monkeys, parrots, and sloths. It seems that the world was smaller than it is now and expanded. Australia and Asia were pulled loose on one side and Africa on the other. The coasts almost fit, and paleontology proves them to have been united once. Nothing sank. They just separated . . ."

I am, or hope to be, a geologist, having a B.A. and an M.S. degree from the University of Iowa in geology. I know nothing of the geology of that region, and do not question, but rather learn with interest, that such fossil remains are found there. But your description, or rather explanation of their presence and of the dynamics involved, is the reason for this letter. As you doubtless know, you gave a brief description of Wagner's Hypothesis of Floating Continents; an ingenious idea that has received much attention, but is far from a proved fact. I am quite sure one or two professors of geology in this country who are cracked on the subject would tear their hair, if they had any, on reading your article.

I believe some learned association of American geologists has lately prepared a symposium on the subject of floating continents; and I think there is a bibliography of papers relating to it. Anyway, I'd hesitate to call down the wrath of some of the old boys by intimating that said hypothesis was a proved fact. I don't know where you got your dope, but I do know that the subject has caused a lot of fur to fly; and in some places is dismissed, with a scientific snicker. I'll be journeying back to my alma mater soon, via highways and brake rods, to take a little more work, and assist in initiating reluc-

tant freshman into the charms of the study of geology; and will gladly provide you with data, with the help of the very good library there.

Understand, I'm not questioning the theory of the thing—it's a grand idea to play with—but only your statement: ". . . paleontology *proves* them to have been united once."—H. DONALD CURRY

Mr. Young's reply:

Orlando, Florida

Regarding the theory of the earth having expanded: Years ago one thing and another caused me to doubt the theory of North and South America having been peopled from Asia via the Bering Straits ice bridge and to more or less accept the theory of both continents having been peopled, in some way, horizontally from Asia. The aborigines of S. A. are a pretty fair example of South Sea Islanders; and belt by belt, allowing as much time as it took a camel to become a llama, we find corresponding people. The Quicheans and Aymaras of the Andes are a pretty fair grade of Tibetans. On the east coast of S. A. we have black, straight-haired Indians. Coming up into Central America into the old Mayan habitat, we have similar stone images and a hieroglyphics from which the old Egyptian hieroglyphics could have been derived. In fact, when you see them side by side, as Le Plongeon has placed them, you can see it with half an eye. My friend, James Bardin of the University of Virginia, is working on the Maya language now and hopes to bring out something new soon.

ALSO, if you twist things about a bit, fit in the West Indies, bring the west coast of Africa over to fit on to the east coast of S. A. you can readily see where Egypt could have been fastened on to Central America. On a bit north by bringing Greenland and Iceland down and making all sorts of due allowances you can fit Europe to North America. On the west side of North America by bringing Asia up near, you can make similar joints to show that Asia, the South Sea Islands, Australia, etc., were in one chunk. A fellow quite likely could just as easily disprove it in the same manner, I reckon, but to me it seems quite accurate.

In digging in some works on paleontology I ran up against what they seemed to think was a mystery, i.e., the fossils of lower S. A., the South Sea Islands, and Australia were identical. I think I found this in Dodd Mead's Encyclopedia. All of this, with numerous other things, caused me to evolve a sort of theory that the earth was at one time not 8,000 miles in diameter but 4,000 or some such figure. I can prove, to myself, quite a number of things by this, supposedly, original theory. If some one else has beat me to it by a century or two, so much the better.

The Incas of the Andes were sun worshippers and they had the big ears of the pre-Persians or Iranians and they inbred as closely as brother to sister in the Royal family in the identical fashion of the Iranians. The architecture is identical. The Maya was more than likely the womb of Egyptian culture. The Aztec came from the other side—possibly from China or Siam. I could list here a good hundred points to prove horizontal migration or, to be more exact, an identical culture broken apart by the land pulling apart. How come those big idols on Easter Island? How come so many other queer things that puzzle our scientists? Just let Einstein say the earth expanded and it would give it weight. He is likely to say so one of these days.—EDGAR YOUNG

IN LINE with a reader's suggestion that I print a list of the places in the chief cities abroad where *Adventure* may be procured, the following, from our London distribution agent, will be of interest:

Devon House,
173 Great Portland Street,
London, W. 1

"It is, as you will probably understand, almost an impossible task to send a complete list of even the large newsdealers who sell *Adventure*, but we are glad to be able to let you have the following information:

"*Adventure* may be obtained through any newsagent or bookseller in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales or on the Continent from the following:

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE, 111 rue Reaumur, Paris, and from principal railway bookstalls and kiosks in Paris and other important towns in France.

AGENCE DECHENNE, 20 rue du Persil, Brussels, and from principal railway bookstalls and kiosks in important towns in Belgium.

SR. AUGUSTO R. MIDOES, 117 R. Retroseiros 119, Apartado No. 21, Lisbon, Portugal.

LITTORINS BOKHANDEL, Kristianstad, Sweden.

M. ALBIN WESTLINGS, Bokhandel, Stortgatan 34, Orebro, Sweden.

RICHARD SAGL, Korunni Tr. 97., Prague-Vinchrady, Checko-Slovakia.

G. PAJU, Agence Générale de Journaux, Tallinn, Esthonia.

DR. FOTI JOZSEF LAJOS, IV, Iranyi-Utica 20, Budapest, Hungary.

"It would be well to make a footnote to this list to the effect that any case of difficulty in obtaining copies should be reported to The Rolls House Publishing Co., Ltd., 2 Breams Building, London, E.C.4., England."

We trust that the foregoing information will be helpful.—C. H. MEDINA

And bearing on the subject of out-of-the-way spots into which our magazine penetrates, comes this note from A. deHerries Smith:

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

You might be interested in the following. As you know, the winters are infernally long in the North and the "days" ditto. Consequently there

is a tremendous demand for reading matter, and but little chance of obtaining any. To offset this, for a considerable number of years, John Michaels of Edmonton (ex-N.Y.C. newsboy and now "king" of the newsdealers in Canada's farthest north city) sends down *tons* of old magazines each season before navigation closes.

These magazines are packed in cases for the different posts by the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northern Traders and other similar outfits. First the post folks have a go at them, then the "free traders", the Mounted Police, the trappers and other wanderers enjoy them, and finally they find their way into Eskimo igloos and Indian teepees all through the Lone Land.

The H.B.C. man also told me that the trappers rather resent being picked on as the villains all the time and the Mounted Police as the heroes. A peculiar thing is that the halfbreeds who can read take a particular delight in reading stories which mention their clan, and do not seem to resent the fact that they are always pictured as slant-eyed killers stealing hither and yon on silent moccasins.

On one of my trips down north I found some illustrations from *Adventure* decorating a Slavi teepee at Fort Norman, while the Eskimo women use such pictures as patterns for clothing!

—A. DE HERRIES SMITH

A NOTE about the strongholds of the Crusaders, by Harold Lamb, in connection with "The Panther," in this issue:

Piedmont, Cal.

Few of us know that the frontier line of the Crusaders' castles still exists in the hills of Syria and Palestine. There is a good reason why this line of citadels remains almost unknown. Outside of a magazine article or two, the only description in print that I know of is by a French archeologist, Rey, published in 1871 in the *Documents Inédites sur L'Histoire de France*. And the country remained, until Allenby's campaign late in the World War—the one Lawrence had a hand in—under the Turks. Few visitors did more than look in along the coast. For two good reasons the Crusaders' citadels along the coast are pretty much demolished: First, Baibars, Kalawun and Khamil made a point of destroying them, so that Crusaders thereafter could not use them as landing points; second, during the last seven-odd centuries, the people of the country have taken the building stone out of the Crusaders' ruins for their houses.

SO, ON the coast, only the castle at Tripoli, the little cathedral at Tortosa and the ruined sea-citadel of Château Pélerin are well preserved. The Turks used the Tripoli castle as a garrison post and prison, and Château Pélerin (the Arabs call it Athlit now) was too far from any village to serve as a source of building stone. The church at Tartous—as Tortosa is called now—was turned into a mosque, with a minaret tower like a sentry box stuck up on one corner. It's a beautiful thing, deserted now.

Of course you can find ruins of other points along the coast—part of St. Louis' castle at Saida (Sidon) and then, the buildings of the Hospitallers are well preserved at Acre. They were digging out a fine little chapel that had served as a Turkish stable when I was there. But the walls and most of Acre, as they stand now, date from the Napoleonic era.

BUT the great castles back in the hills take your breath away. There are a dozen big fellows stretching south from Antioch, down to Kerak east of the Dead Sea—a line of about 540 kilometers or, if my reckoning is right, 280 miles. And a half dozen strong towers interconnecting.

These are *not* the miniature medieval castles of feudal Europe. Most of them are twice the size of Coucy, the largest of the feudal castles of France. Moreover the European structures have been built over for the most part, and restored until little of the twelfth century construction remains as it was. The *cité* of Carcassonne, in southern France, for instance, was restored by Viollet-le-Duc in the last century. By way of comparison, Carcassonne (which was really a fortified town, not a castle) is said to be 1,600 yards in the circuit of its outer walls. While Kerak, across the Dead sea, in Palestine is, I think, 2,700 yards in its outer circuit.

YOU see the Crusaders had to fortify whole summits of mountains. The war out there was a real war, and the fortified points had to accommodate several hundred to five thousand or more human beings, with chargers, cattle and sheep—granaries and reservoirs. They had to plan out the water supply in a dry country.

Most of the castles have interior wells. The Arab villagers under the hill where Belfort stands still go up to the castle to get their water. The well at the Krak is deep. I dropped a stone in it and had to listen five or six seconds for the splash. Also, because a single well would not serve the big places, they had reservoirs for rain water. At Marghab the reservoir was some thirty yards outside the great tower, within arrow range of the walls. It has a healthy forest growing in it now.

I DON'T suppose that any other war has left monuments like this line of deserted citadels in the hills of Syria and Palestine. No government has done anything to restore or repair them—for five hundred years, anyway. The French shelled brigands out of two of them recently, but the artillery did little more than scar the great stones.

Tourists don't visit them, and they will probably remain as they are, deserted and slowly crumbling under sun and rain for some centuries yet. I've seen a good many things, but nothing quite as impressive as those strongholds of the Crusaders.

—HAROLD LAMB

ASK *Adventure*

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Sea

OLD SHIPS, old times, old records. But who can say where legend ends and truth begins?

Request:—"What was the length and tonnage of the largest sailing vessel? The tallest masts? The fastest time ever made by a sailing vessel? What is the largest sailing ship afloat today? Was there a seven-master that at one time turned over?"

—LEO ROBINSON, Ventura, California

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—Most of the questions you ask can not be answered in a definite statement without leaving an opening for dispute. If by "fastest time made by sailing vessel" you mean speed for a moment, or speed for an hour, or fastest passage between ports, you must say so, and then I shall only tell you that nobody knows. There is a legend that the *Dreadnought* sailed from New York to Ireland in nine days. That is a legend. Even the ship's master, Samuels, who wrote a fine book about her, refrains from mentioning that miraculous passage. There are so many myths about the sea. Your best course is to go to your nearest big library, and set out on a course of study of all the books of Basil Lubbock, Captain Clarke, Keble Chatterton, etc., and write to Thomas Perkins, Salem, Mass., for his list of books dealing with the subjects you mention. It will require all the books I have indicated to tell you all you ask.

There was a seven-masted schooner, *Thomas W. Lawson,* the only seven-master, wrecked in the English Channel; but I never heard that she turned over, though she was quite likely to. She was what sailors called a "ruddy abortion." As for the largest sailing ship afloat today, I suggest you write to Lloyds' Register, Battery, New York, about this. The big ships, such as *Kobehavan, France, Potosi,* etc, have all gone within the years for which I have records. If, however, you only seek to know approximately what big ships were like, the biggest I knew personally was about 8,000 tons gross. Her mast was 200 feet.

Ski

FOOT harness and how to adjust it.

Request:—"1. What is the correct wax to use on skis? Can you give me a formula for home compounding?

2. What are the best foot irons to use? I have a set which are bolted to the ski, the irons shaped like an inverted U, but these seem to chafe through the strap. Is there anything more practical on the market and where may they be purchased?"

—A. A. REDISKE, Mayville, Wisconsin

Reply, by Mr. W. H. Price:—1. Any good wax especially prepared and sold in a block or tube is the best to use on your skis. However, ordinary candle wax rubbed evenly over the bottom of the ski and then ironed in with a fairly warm iron helps to prevent the ski from sticking in mild weather. I very seldom wax my skis during the cold weather, as it makes it very difficult at times ascending steep grades, and I would rather sacrifice a little speed and make climbing easier.

2. The Huitfeldt harness is what I have on my skis and consider the most practical. It consists of an iron leather-lined toepiece which is passed through the hole in the ski and bent up at each side; a short strap passing over the toes and connecting the ends of the metal toepiece; and a long strap which passes through the hole in the ski and roumd the heel of the boot. A third strap crossing the foot behind the toestrap, prevents the heelstrap from slipping under the boot sole at the side.

The toe irons must be hammered or bent (a heavy screw wrench is useful for this) to fit the boot ex-

actly, so that when the boot is pushed home between them the center of the heel lies in the middle of the ski. If the toe irons show any tendency to wobble, small wooden wedges may be driven between them and the side of the cavity in the ski, but by the sides of the toe irons, and not below them, or the ski is apt to split.

If the fastening of the harness fits properly, there should be enough freedom to allow the knee just to touch the front of the ski. This harness is almost generally worn, and may be purchased from any good sporting goods dealer.

Japan

ARMS and armor the style of which did not change until the end of the old feudal system about 1868. One family of armorers practised their art from the twelfth down to the twentieth century. There aren't many rare antiques yet.

Request:—"Some years ago I had an opportunity to view the excellent loan collection of Japanese weapons on display at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Since that time, in prints and articles, I've noticed types of weapons which I do not remember as being among that collection. One such, for example, was a short, broad, curved blade mounted on a six foot pole.

Can you give me a list of all Japanese edged weapons, pole arms, axes (if any) etc., their approximate periods, most famous makers, and the armor used to defend against them? Are schools of the use of such weapons still extant?"

—JOHN A. EISEMAN, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Robert E. Gardner:—It is possible to give but a scant outline of Japanese arms and armor within the confines of a letter. Whereas Europe ceased using armor over two centuries ago, its use in Japan continued until the ancient feudal régime came to an end about 1868. For this reason huge quantities of Japanese arms and armor can still be found in the shops of Japan, and it does not rank in interest with that of Europe with collectors. At a sale held in New York, January, 1927, two lots were offered which consisted of six pole arms and wooden stand, each. Each lot brought but $35.00.

The arms most commonly used in feudal Japan were:

Yari, or lance. The Japanese did not, like the Chinese, produce a great number of forms of pole arms, but confined themselves to four or five basic patterns. Usually finely made.

Yumi-Ya: the bow and arrow.

Teppo: firearms.

Tetsubo: iron staff; some of great weight.

Katana: sword, of which we have the following types:

Dai-to or *Tachi:* usually 26-28 inches in length, borne in time of peace by the Samurai, and intended for use only in the service of the feudal lord.

Sho-to or *Wakizashi:* Equipped with protective hilt; 20 inches over all, and borne by the Samurai in war.

Tan-to or *Kwaiken:* a sort of dagger 11 inches in length.

Naga-Wakizashi: Equipped with protective hilt; usually 24-25 inches over all. Borne by the commoners.

Yori-Doshi: war dagger of the Samurai; takes its name from use as an armor-piercer. The *Tan-to* was used only for committing *hara-kiri* and by women for their personal protection.

Among the famous bladesmiths might be mentioned Norimune (twelfth century), Masamune and Yoshimitsu (thirteenth century), Muranasa (fourteenth century, whose blades were reputed to thirst for blood, and should not be entirely drawn from the scabbard when not in use). One family of armorers, Miochin by name, practised their art from the beginning of the twelfth century through to the twentieth century.

To gain a well grounded understanding of the feudal system and weapons of Japan I would suggest that you read Griffis, "The Mikado's Empire," and Dr. Bashford Dean, "Handbook of Arms and Armor," Metroplitan Museum of Art, New York, N. Y., Part X (Japanese Arms and Armor).

Camera

NOTES on amateur color photography.

Request:—"Where can I buy a camera that will take a picture with the original colors in the print after I develop it?

"Is such a camera made in this country?"

—CHARLES PAQUEK, San Francisco, California

Reply, by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—No satisfactory method of making photographs in color on paper has been invented. It is possible, by using the Autochrome or the Agfa color plates, to make transparencies, and the method of working is not very complicated. There are, however, two disadvantages. First, the result is similar to a lantern slide; that is, it is on glass, and must be looked *through*, not *at*. Second, each exposure makes only one picture; they can not be duplicated, as in ordinary photography, where any number of prints can be made from one negative.

If, however, you want to use this process, write to Agfa Ansco Corporation, Binghamton, New York, for information about the Agfa plates, and to R. J. Fitzsimons Corporation, 75 Fifth Avenue, New York City, for information about Autochromes.

Any plate camera, of the size you want to use, will do for this work, but since the plates are slow as compared to ordinary films, it is desirable to have a fast lens—the faster the better. Perhaps I

should modify slightly my first statement; it is possible to make satisfactory prints in color on paper, by several different methods, but the processes are too difficult for the average worker, and involve considerable apparatus and a great deal of technical knowledge.

Infantryman

FIELD equipment of the typical American soldier—pound by pound.

Request:—"What was the weight of an infantryman's full field equipment during the World War? What did it consist of? And the weight of each article?" —J. G. ELLIS, Crockett, Texas

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—The weight of the American infantryman's full field equipment during the World War varied between 60 and 75 pounds. The exact weight depended upon several conditions, such as time of year, the individual's particular duties, whether action was imminent or not and, of course, how much John Doughboy had been able to get rid of without attracting the attention of higher authority.

The main items which made up his load, with average weights of each, were:

Gas mask, 3.8 pounds; rifle 8.5 to 9.5 pounds; bayonet and scabbard, 1.5 lbs.; ammunition up to 13 lbs.; haversack and pack carrier 2.5 lbs.; blanket 3.5 lbs.; reserve ration 3 lbs.; intrenching tool with carrier 2 to 2.5 lbs.; cartridge belt 1.4 lbs.; canteen 1.3 lbs.; extra clothing 2 lbs.; toilet articles 1 lb.; mess kit 1 lb.; shelter half, pins, ropes 3.5 lbs.; raincoat 3.2 lbs.; extra shoes 2.5 lbs.; clothing on person, depending on season, 10 to 20 lbs.

Other incidentals such as wire cutters, compass, foot powder, adhesive tape, housewife, grenade discharger, etc., were distributed among members of the squad.

Santo Domingo

WHAT to do with a two-thousand acre woodlot.

Request:—"I am owner of forty acres, ten miles north of Matanzas, Santo Domingo (on the north coast), and three miles from the ocean. The land lies between two rivers (have forgotten the names). There are two thousand acres in the tract, and each man in the company owns forty acres.

The tract is covered with a hard wood that runs about two thousand feet to the acre.

At one time a banana company was negotiating to buy the timber, and offered fifty dollars a thousand feet.

Do you know if this timber can be sold now? Would it have to be cut and the logs sold, or would a company buy it and do the cutting themselves? I would prefer to sell the timber standing.

If a company wanted the whole two thousand acres, it could be arranged for them to buy the whole tract of timber.

Any information you can give me on this subject will be very much appreciated."

—E. P. KEATON, Los Angeles, California

Reply, by Mr. William R. Barbour:—I am quite well acquainted with the region in Santo Domingo you mention, and should think that the estimate of 2000 feet of timber per acre would be about correct. This is a very low stand as tropical timber goes, so low that lumbering operations would be very expensive.

With the possible exceptions of some mahogany, Spanish cedar, and satinwood which may be on the tract (and I doubt if there can be very much, for those three species have been about cleaned out of all accessible regions in Santo Domingo) you have no woods which have any settled market in the United States or Europe.

It seems almost impossible that any banana company could ever have offered $50 a thousand for the timber, as vast quantities of land in Santo Domingo can be bought for about $25 or less per acre, land, timber, and all.

I am sorry to be discouraging, but you want the facts as I see them. I can only think of one way of disposing of your timber: convert it into firewood (or preferably into charcoal) and take it over in sailboats to Porto Rico, where fuel commands a good price.

Any purchaser of your land would buy it for the land, not for the timber; indeed would pay more for it after the timber had been removed. That section is pretty good sugarcane, banana and cacao land.

Coin

ANTOINE DER TOUNENS—fantastic fellow!—appointed himself king of Patagonia, struck coins and metals, but it was all in vain. And now in a little two-centavo piece crops up a reminder of his mad adventure.

Request:—"I have in my collection of coins a piece of bronze. It has a proof surface and is marred only by a prominent die break on the reverse. It may be described as follows: *Obv:* a crowned square shield, divided quarterly. Each quarter contains a figure as of Justice, etc. Around this, a circle of 27 stars, which in turn is encircled by the legend 'ORELIE-ANTOINE I^{R} ROI D'ARAUCANIE ET DE PATAGONIE.' *Rev:* 'DOS CENTAVOS' above and the date 1874 below, in a half wreath with a half circle of eleven stars and the legend 'NOUVELLE FRANCE' above. Both obverse and reverse have a serrate border, and the edge is plain.

I realize that Patagonia has for years been under the sovereignty of Argentina, and am equally sure that no such royal government existed. I have assumed, therefore, that the piece referred to is either a pattern or essai for a pretended French government. Details are lacking, however, and I

shall be grateful for such assistance as you can render me."

—W. W. WOODSIDE, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—Your 2-centavo piece dated 1874, of Orelie Antoine I, king of Araucania and Patagonia, is simply a fantasy. However, it has an interesting history. In 1861, a Frenchman by the name of Antoine der Tounens, a half crazy adventurer living in Chile, conceived the idea of making parts of Araucania and Patagonia into a kingdom with himself as the head. He assumed the title of Orelie Antoine I, but was soon captured by the Chileans and then deported to France.

There he continued his efforts to get back, and finally, after elaborate preparations including the issuing of money and various orders and decorations which he instituted, he reached his phantom kingdom a second time in 1864. His endeavors were soon nipped in the bud, and I very much doubt if any of his money got into circulation. The pieces were quite common a number of years ago, as the unused remainder was put upon the market.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

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2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. DO NOT send questions to this magazine.

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Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

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U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 507 No. Harper, Hollywood, Cal.

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State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3758 81st Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

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American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

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Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

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Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Ornithology *General information on birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology *(a) Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration. (c) Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs That Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON, *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

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Hockey "Daniel," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH.

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Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

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Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

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Mexico Part 4 *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Nochixtlan, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

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Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, c/o William H. Souls, 1481 Beacon St., Boston, Massachusetts.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 5607 Virginia Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

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Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Travelers Hotel, Reno, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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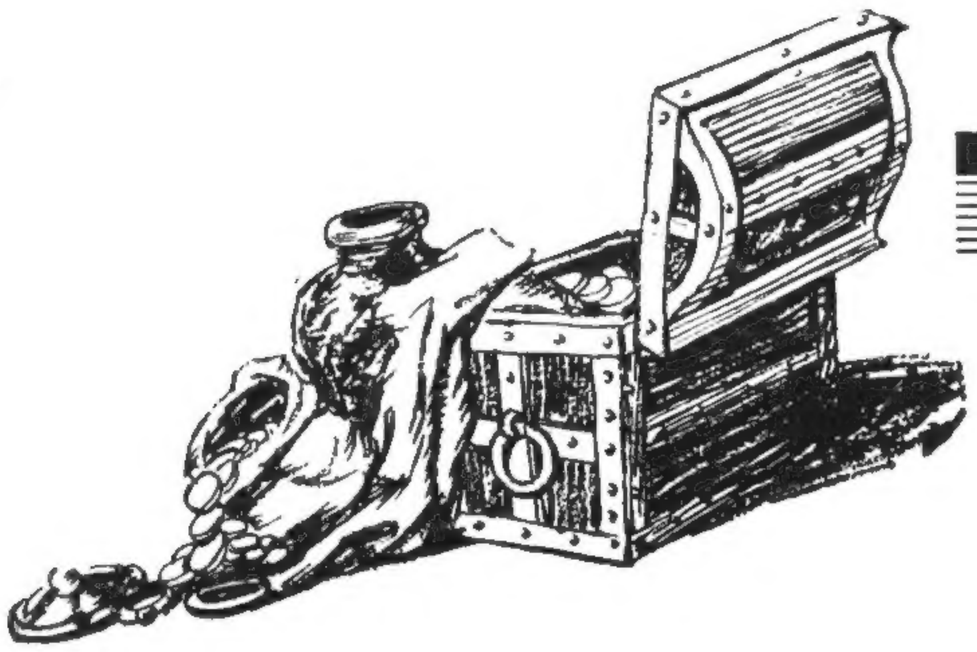

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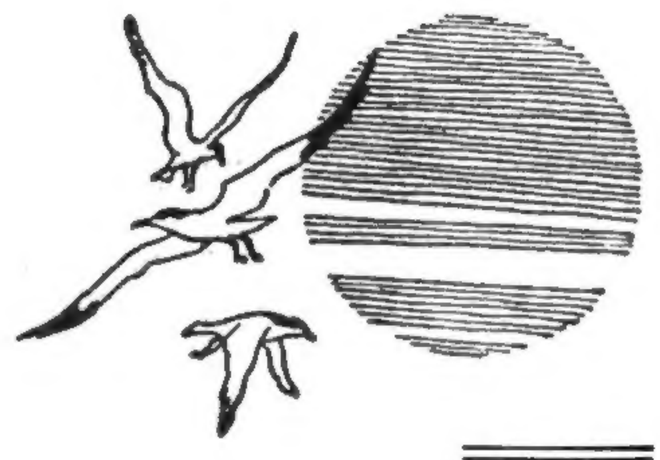

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